

# JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Issue No. 142 / Volume 36 / Number 2 / Spring 1987

## JEWES AND JUDAISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:

### Problems and Perils

*Scanning The Future* ROBERT GORDIS 131

### The American Jewish Community

*Population Trends in American Jewry* SIDNEY GOLDSTEIN 135

*The Jewish Family: Lights and Shadows* YEHUDA ROSENMAN 147

*Jewish Community Centers: Builders of the Jewish Future* ESTHER LEAH RITZ 154

*Fund Raising in the Future* STANLEY B. HOROWITZ 158

### Controversial Issues In Religion

*Religious Pluralism: A Problem Or A Solution* SOL ROTH 162

*Judaism and Feminism: The Unfinished Agenda* ANNE LAPIDUS LERNER 167

### The Four Movements in American Judaism

*Orthodoxy: Flourishing But Divided* LOUIS BERNSTEIN 174

*Conservative Judaism Confronts Its Future* MORDECAI WAXMAN 179

*Living in Two Worlds — Reform Judaism in the Diaspora* W. GUNTHER PLAUT 187

*Reconstructionism: Judaism For Today* JACOB J. STAUB 195

### Zionism: Its Past And Its Future

*Zionism: Past Achievements and Future Programs* FRIEDA S. LEWIS 204

*Zionism: The Failure of Success* MITCHELL COHEN 211

### Education: For Laity And Leadership

*The Afternoon School* MORTON SIEGEL 217

*The Jewish Day School — The Next Half-Century* ALVIN I. SCHIFF 220

*What Training for Rabbis?* DAVID LIEBER 226

### Jewish Literature and Journalism

*Jewish Culture: Unfinished Business* SANFORD PINSKER 233

*The Jewish Press — Chronicle of the Contemporary Scene* JEROME WM. LIPPMAN 238

*"Jerusalem, the Joy of the Whole Earth"* ABRAHAM E. MILLGRAM 243

### REVIEWS

*Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective*  
by Marc Lee Raphael HENRY L. FEINGOLD 250

### VERSE

*The Star* DAVID SPARENBERG 173

*Ya'akov & Ra-chel* ADAM D. FISHER 216

*The Yeshiva Couple's Wedding* JACK E. FRIEDMAN 242

*The Sisters* SARAH SINGER 252

BOOKS RECEIVED 254

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

*Judaism* will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

# JEWES AND JUDAISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

## Problems and Perils

### *Scanning The Future*

ROBERT GORDIS

IT IS SELF-EVIDENT THAT NO SUBSTANTIVE character inheres in the numbers which we assign in our calendars to years, decades and centuries. Nonetheless, language exerts a powerful influence upon thought. Hence we think and speak of the "Gay Nineties," the "Mauve Decade" or the eighteenth century as though the span of time that these terms delimit possesses a special character and unity of its own.

As we approach the last decade of this century, we are drawn irresistibly to surveying the achievements and the failures of the present generation. More importantly, we are impelled to sketch out the problems and potentialities of the century now waiting in the wings.

Yielding to this irrational yet deep-seated impulse to endow the numbers of the years with special significance, we have projected a wide-ranging symposium on the theme, "Jews and Judaism Facing the Twenty-First Century: Prospects and Perils." There is a widespread and well-founded conviction abroad that while Judaism and the Jewish people are rich in potential, both are confronted by major problems and even perils that threaten their survival.

We have invited a score of distinguished Jewish scholars and leaders, working in various sectors of Jewish life, to give us a candid and objective evaluation of their respective areas of competence, highlighting the "unfinished business" that will demand attention in the years ahead.

The symposium has been grouped under six headings. The first, "The American-Jewish Community," opens with an analysis of the demographic facts regarding American Jewry, the physical survival of which has increasingly been called into question in our day.

The Jewish family has long been regarded as the bedrock of Jewish survival. Today, no other major social institution of Western civilization

has been as battered and undermined as much as the family. The U.S. Census Bureau has published figures indicating that, within the last year, more than 200,000 couples joined two million others in "living together" without benefit of judge or clergy. The ideal of a permanent relationship and the assumption of mature responsibility are the heart and essence of the marriage bond. Both objectives are clearly being abandoned by large numbers of our contemporaries, primarily by the young, but by no means only by them. The implications for the Jewish family of these and other far-reaching changes in contemporary society are explored in another essay.

The fissures in the Jewish community along religious and ideological lines are all too evident. An important institution seeking to transcend these divisions today is the Jewish community center, the subject of another paper. Finally, changing socio-economic patterns among Americans create new problems in the funding of the institutions and movements in Jewish life. They are discussed by an expert in the field.

Perhaps the two principal foci of controversy in the American Jewish community are the role of women in religion and society and the recognition of pluralism, both as a reality and as a value, in Jewish religious life. They are treated in the second section under the rubric, "Controversial Issues in Judaism." These two presentations serve as an admirable introduction to the third section of the symposium entitled, "The Four Movements in American Judaism." Here, distinguished and thoughtful spokesmen for each of the major groupings in American Judaism offer their analysis of the problems confronting, respectively, Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform and Reconstructionism.

As the State of Israel approaches its fortieth anniversary, a landmark which the Sages described as "the age of understanding," the Zionist movement, the progenitor of the Jewish State, is being subjected to increasing criticism. It is not only "republics that are ungrateful." All too easily people forgot that the greatest political and cultural achievement in modern history — the emergence, growth and progress of the State of Israel — is to be credited to Zionism.

The fourth section of the symposium, "Zionism — Its Past and Its Future," examines both the achievements and the problems confronting the movement. Its first goal — the creation of a Jewish homeland — is a reality. Its second goal — the liquidation of the Diaspora — gives no sign of being achieved, even after the horrors of the Holocaust and its aftermath. It may, therefore, be asked whether Zionism is not a classic illustration of the failure of success.

The fifth section is entitled "Education for Laity and Leadership." For many years every Jewish gathering has gone through the motions of paying a ritual tribute to the importance of Jewish education. Today, it is clear that what was an empty gesture at worst and a platitude at best has become a revolutionary truth — education is the touchstone of Jewish

survival. The abysmally low birthrate in Jewish families is incapable of reproducing the present generation.

The tide of intermarriage now affects nearly one marriage by a Jew out of three. To be sure, intermarriage brings some valuable accessions to the Jewish community, particularly when formal conversion to Judaism takes place. However, all studies indicate that three out of four children of intermarriage are lost to Judaism. Finally, there are the hydra-headed processes of assimilation and alienation which operate in countless automatic and painless ways to attenuate the Jewish consciousness of many thousands of Jews who do not formally break with Judaism, but have no knowledge of their heritage, no concern for their destiny. The vague and distorted memories of Jewish experience that may linger are no longer present in their children, who are raised as total strangers to their Jewish background. If they have any Jewish experience at all, it will be some manifestation subtle or gross, of anti-Semitism in their personal lives.

Jewish survival imperiously demands the reordering of priorities. This will, by no means, be an easy task in view of the strong vested interests devoted to laudable goals, the maintenance of philanthropic institutions and the massive support of the State of Israel. Yet, unless Jewish education is recognized as the elixir of life for the Jewish community, neither *zedakah* nor Israel will long command the allegiance of American Jews.

The two principle instrumentalities for the education of Jewish children have been the religious school, primarily on Sundays, and the weekday afternoon "Hebrew School." The first has continued to retain its hold in Reform Judaism as enrollment figures would indicate. The afternoon Hebrew school has declined substantially in Orthodox and Conservative congregations. Communal Talmud Torahs, which, in the past, boasted some of the finest educational institutions in the Jewish community, have largely disappeared. The emerging pattern is predominantly that of the Jewish day school. Originally founded and nurtured in Orthodox circles, it is increasingly espoused by Conservative Judaism, which has established a significant network of its own, and by a growing number of Reform day schools as well. Two papers examine the afternoon school and the day school as the most significant instrumentalities for the education of Jewish children.

One of the most remarkable developments in American Jewish life during the past two decades has been the burgeoning of Jewish studies on the campuses of over two hundred American and Canadian colleges and universities. Over one thousand Jewish academicians teach tens of thousands of students, Christian as well as Jewish, annually. The subjects include the various aspects of the Jewish historical experience, from Abraham to the Holocaust, the Bible, Rabbinic texts, modern Hebrew and Yiddish as languages and literatures, Jewish theology and philosophy and contemporary Jewish thought. Since the achievements and prob-

lems in this area were explored in depth in a special symposium, "Jewish Studies in the University," published in the Spring 1986 issue of JUDAISM, the treatment of this aspect of Jewish education is not included in the present symposium.

A thousand years ago the Jewish philosopher, Saadia, declared, "God never leaves his people without leaders to instruct and elevate them, that thereby their condition may be improved." For this divine task human assistance is required. The character and quality of the Jewish community of tomorrow will be determined, to a substantial degree, by the ideals and the competence of its religious leaders. In the paper devoted to the training of rabbis, concrete suggestions are offered for important changes.

The sixth section of the symposium is devoted to two fundamental aspects of Jewish culture which, historically, has largely expressed itself through the written and the spoken word. The prospects for a flourishing American-Jewish literature are explored in one essay. Another analyses the condition of the Anglo-Jewish press, which is the major instrument of Jewish contact for many hundreds of thousands of American Jews throughout the continent. American Jewry also possesses a wealth of first rate journals which represent the cutting edge of Jewish scholarship and thought. Their survival and growth in the future will have a significant influence on the quality and content of Jewish life and thought. In this distinguished company JUDAISM, as a journal, has its own special niche.

The symposium as a whole demonstrates the presence of major problems confronting the Jewish community, but it also calls attention to the resources available for meeting these problems and building a Jewish life in the twenty-first century that will not only maintain the continuity with the past but will improve the content and quality of the Jewish experience for the generations to come.

# I.

## ***The American Jewish Community***

### ***Population Trends in American Jewry***

SIDNEY GOLDSTEIN

AMERICAN JEWS CONSTITUTE THE LARGEST Jewish community in the world, but their total number has always been a matter of conjecture. Because the U.S. Constitution prohibits the government from inquiring into matters of creed, the mandatory nationwide census conducted every ten years does not include questions about religious identity. Nor has the Jewish community itself ever been organized tightly enough to make a thorough, dependable internal census possible.

Over the years, however, social scientists have developed a number of procedures for counting American Jews and estimating past and present Jewish population and trends. It is, of course, risky to project these estimates into the future; nevertheless, some trends are unmistakable.

The Jewish population of the United States grew from about 1,000 in 1790 to one million by the end of the 19th century. But this growth was dwarfed by the mass immigration that brought some 3 million East European Jews to the U.S. between 1880 and 1930, and raised the percentage of Jews in the total population from 0.5% in 1880 to an estimated 3.6% (4.2 million) at the end of the 1920s. The proportion of Jews in this country reached a peak of 3.7% in the mid 1930s. Over the next fifty years, curtailed immigration, reduced fertility, and the effects of assimilation and intermarriage considerably slowed this growth rate. By 1984, Jewish households (defined as households containing one or more Jews) included approximately 5.8 million persons of whom about 5.4-5.5 million were Jews. Because of their much slower rate of growth than the total American population, by 1984 Jews constituted only between 2.3 and 2.5% of the total population.

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A major factor in the decline of the growth rate was the end of mass Jewish immigration to the U.S. Despite the refugee influx after World War II, and the immigration of an estimated 80,000 Soviet Jews and between 50,000 and 100,000 Israelis in the 1970s, more than 80% of the Jewish community today is native-born, and half or more of these are third and fourth generation Americans. This means that, except for a relatively small number of immigrants, especially now that movement from the Soviet Union has virtually stopped and that migration from Israel seems to have tapered off, the American Jewish community must depend very largely on itself to maintain its numbers. Indeed, the number of immigrants may not be large enough to cancel losses sustained from the combined effects of low fertility, mortality, intermarriage, and assimilation. It means, too, that the demographic, socio-cultural and religious future of the community will depend, to a great degree, on how its members react to the freedom to integrate spatially, economically, and socially into the larger American social structure.

### *Marriage And Fertility*

American Jews have had the distinction of having smaller families than virtually any other ethnic and religious group in the country. Available evidence from the late 19th century points to a Jewish birthrate lower than that of the non-Jewish population and this differential seems to have persisted to the present day, although convergence in fertility behavior between Jews and non-Jews has been taking place as a result of the more widespread acceptance of the smaller family and the greater practice of family planning. Yet, Jews still tend to marry later, desire and expect to have smaller families, be more approving of contraception and, apparently, practice birth control more often and more efficiently than do most other groups. In part, these patterns reflect the attitudes and practices of a highly urban, educated, and rational population. In small part, they may also represent a reaction to minority status and all that such status implies, socially and psychologically. Whatever the reasons, lower-than-average fertility, particularly when it hovers at, or goes below, the replacement level of 2.1 children per married couple, could contribute to a decline in the total number of Jews.<sup>1</sup>

Such decline may be accelerated as well by changing marital patterns, especially if these lead to non-marriage. Young Jews still seem to place a high value on marriage and the family. A study of high school seniors

1. Ultra-Orthodox fertility constitutes an exception to the low fertility rates characterizing Jews as a whole. The high birth rates of this group, reflecting a strong emphasis on the family and on traditional roles for women and their much lower use of birth control, do not, however, significantly affect overall Jewish fertility levels because the ultra-Orthodox comprise a relatively small percentage of the total population. Should this percentage increase in the future, as their growing number of children mature and form their own families, the impact of their higher fertility may be felt more strongly.



showed that about 95% of the young Jewish men and women expect to marry, more than was true of the members of the other religious groups; but a very large percentage of the Jews expect to marry later than do non-Jews.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Jewish young people, like those in the general population, are already postponing marriage, thereby raising serious doubts about whether the high levels of marriage indicated by the expectation data will be realized. Pooled national data documenting actual behavior for the 1960s and 1970s point strongly to a rise in age at marriage for Jews, a reduction in the percent ever married by the time they reached their 40s, and a widening, rather than narrowing, gap between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the 1960s, when 90% of Jews age 25-34 were married, only 74% in this age group were married in the 1970s. For ages 35-44, the level reached 97% in the 1960s but only 91% in the 1970s, 5 percentage points below the non-Jewish level.

Supporting such a conclusion is the evidence from the A.J.C. study of "Jewish College Freshmen."<sup>4</sup> A 1971 survey of freshmen found only 4% of the men and 20% of the women reporting that they regarded it as "essential or very important to get married in the next five years." By 1980, when most of these freshmen were already in their late 20s, only 33% of the men and 42% of the women were married (another 2 and 5% had been married and were already divorced). By contrast, among non-Jews, 56% of the men and 57% of the women were married. Interesting, too, is that only about 5% of the Jews were already parents, as compared to one-fourth of the non-Jews.

That late marriage and low levels of marriage characterize Jews is also suggested by a 1984 study of Philadelphia's Jewish community,<sup>5</sup> which found that 11% of the women and 16% of the men between ages 31 and 40 had never married. The national data and those for Philadelphia both suggest that, for a rising percentage of Jews, postponement of marriage may lead to eschewal of marriage, at least until the end of the reproductive period.

Such a delay and possible avoidance of marriage may, in turn, have implications for overall fertility levels, in the absence of any strong trend toward extra-marital fertility among single Jewish women. Moreover, the impact of changing marriage patterns on fertility may be compounded by changing levels of divorce. While divorce is considerably lower among Jews than non-Jews, the proportions of divorced persons and of one-

2. Calvin Goldscheider and Frances K. Goldscheider, "Family Size Expectations of Young American Jewish Adults." Paper presented at 9th World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, August, 1985).

3. Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983).

4. Geraldine Rosenfield, "Jewish College Freshmen: An Analysis of Three Studies" (New York: American Jewish Committee, June, 1984), mimeographed.

5. William L. Yancey and Ira Goldstein, *The Jewish Population of the Greater Philadelphia Area* (Philadelphia: Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia, 1984).

parent households has risen in recent years.<sup>6</sup> For example, in Philadelphia, 6% of all women and 7% of all men ages 31-40 were separated or divorced. A 1985 study of Baltimore found 5% of the adults separated or divorced at the time of the survey, compared to under 2% in 1968; it also found that of those married, 15% had been married more than once, whereas, in 1968, multiple marriages characterized only 8% of the married adults, although some of these remarriages undoubtedly involved widowed persons.

In view of these marriage patterns and because of past patterns of Jewish fertility, experts are engaged in considerable debate about whether Jewish fertility is, or will be, sufficiently high to assure replacement.<sup>7</sup> All seem in agreement that, at best, Jewish fertility will not exceed the replacement level of 2.1 children per mother. Whether subreplacement levels will come to characterize Jews depends, however, on the assumptions made and how much confidence can be placed in past and recent behavior as predictors of future behavior and in expressions of fertility expectations as reliable indicators of future childbearing. Cohen argued that

on the basis of past experience, it does seem safe to say that the contemplated Jewish birthrate for today's Jewish parents may remain well below the number needed for replacement. (His explanation for such an expectation seems reasonable); . . ." so long as middle-class urbanized Americans experience low birthrates, so will comparable Jews. Jewish birth patterns will generally follow those of the larger society as they have in the past.<sup>8</sup>

The data cited by Cohen support this conclusion. Boston's evermarried Jewish women aged 25-34 averaged only 1.5 children in 1965; in 1975 Jewish women aged 25-34 averaged only 0.7 children. The national data for Jews, although somewhat higher at 2.1 in the 1960s and 1.2 in the 1970s, pointed in the same direction. Whether the 25-34 age group will raise its fertility substantially as it moves through the final decade of reproduction (age 35-44) remains to be determined.

Cohen and Goldscheider<sup>9</sup> later argued that it is likely to do so and that it will, in fact, achieve close to replacement levels. Citing data from the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth,<sup>10</sup> as well as earlier surveys,

6. Gary Tobin and Alvin Chenkin, "Recent Jewish Community Population Studies: A Roundup," *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 85 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), pp. 154-178.

7. Steven M. Cohen and Calvin Goldscheider, "Jews, More or Less," *Moment*, 9 (September 1984): 41-46; Sidney Goldstein, "American Jewish Demography: Inconsistencies that Challenge." Paper presented at 9th World Congress of Jewish Studies, (Jerusalem, August, 1985).

8. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, pp. 118, 120.

9. Cohen and Goldscheider, "Jews, More or Less."

10. William D. Mosher and Calvin Goldscheider, "Contraceptive Patterns of Religious and Racial Groups in the United States, 1955-76: Convergence and Distinctiveness," *Studies in Family Planning*, 15 (May/June 1984): 101-111.

Goldscheider and Goldscheider argue that Jewish fertility is likely to remain below that of Protestants and Catholics, but that the 2.1 average expected by the currently and evermarried women does not point to below replacement level fertility. They claim that this conclusion is reinforced by the findings in a 1972 national sample of high school seniors that Jews expect about two children on average and continued to do so in 1979.<sup>11</sup>

Yet Goldscheider acknowledges that the accuracy of the predictors of replacement level fertility will depend on the proportion of Jewish women marrying. If a substantial percentage of Jewish women do not marry or have children outside of marriage, the fertility of the married, even if it averages 2.1 children, will not be adequate to replace all of the married and unmarried. Moreover, the 2.1 average may, itself, be too high. For example, a 1985 study of Baltimore<sup>12</sup> found 12% of Jewish women aged 35-44 still childless, and 9% of women aged 25-44 expected to remain childless; a substantial percentage also expected only one child.

Some have speculated that changing family values associated with late stages of the feminist movement are resulting in a greater acceptance of children in the American family in the mid-1980s than there was earlier and that this may influence Jewish family size as well. That such a conclusion is not justified for the American population is suggested by a comparison of the results of national surveys conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1985 and those conducted in earlier decades.<sup>13</sup>

In 1976, an average of 468 children had been born for every 1,000 women age 18-24, and these women expected a total of 2,038, which would have been just below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. These averages changed minimally in the succeeding ten years. In 1985, for every 1,000 white women between ages 18 and 24, 463 births had already occurred and a total of 2,079 were expected, again pointing to below replacement fertility levels. The patterns for white women age 30-34, near the end of their childbearing, also point to below replacement fertility. In 1976, an average of 2,218 children had been born per 1,000 white women in this age group, and a total just above replacement level (2,390 per 1,000) was expected. By 1985, women of this age had averaged only 1,612 children per 1,000 and expected a total of only 1,979, below replacement.

Such low fertility reflects, in part, the rise in childlessness. In 1985, 26.2% of all women age 30-34 were still childless, compared to 19.8% in 1980. While about half of these women still expected to have a birth, past

11. See Note 2.

12. Gary A. Tobin, *A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore* (Baltimore: Associated Jewish Charities and Welfare Funds, 1986).

13. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Fertility of American Women: June 1985," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 406 (June, 1986), (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

experience suggests otherwise. Of the 19.8% without children in 1980, over four-fifths were still childless by 1985.

Overall, therefore, these national data provide no basis for believing that the recent low fertility of the white population of the United States is likely to shift upward to any significant degree in the near future. Unfortunately, no comparable national time series is available for the Jewish population. There is no convincing evidence, however, that Jews will deviate from the pattern of low fertility that seems likely to continue among whites as a whole, especially given the patterns of late marriage and high educational levels that characterize the Jewish population.

A wide range of other data on the Jewish population also point to below replacement fertility,<sup>14</sup> so that there seems to be no strong evidence that Jewish fertility will exceed the below replacement levels anticipated for highly educated whites in the general American population.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the reliability of expectations with respect to both marriage and fertility are doubtful, especially on the part of young, unmarried women. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Jewish fertility will not exceed replacement level in the near future and that, more likely, it will fall somewhat below replacement. But it needs stressing here that, even if fertility is at replacement level, this does not assure maintenance of population size if losses occur concurrently through the effects of high mortality due to an aging population and the impact of assimilation and intermarriage.

### *Intermarriage*

Until fairly recently, the Jewish community has been much more concerned with the effects of intermarriage than of fertility on demographic survival. If marital assimilation takes place at a high rate, the Jewish group faces demographic losses both through the assimilation of the Jewish partner and through the loss of children born to such a marriage. Even if the Jewish partner does not assimilate, intermarriage is likely to reduce the rate of growth in the absence of extensive conversions of the non-Jewish spouses and, especially, of birth of children who are Jewish. Regrettably, there is no fully reliable and recent set of information on the rates of intermarriage and on its impact on identity. The evidence we do have suggests that the level of intermarriage, the extent of conversion, and the impact of conversion and mixed marriage on Jewish identity vary considerably, depending on the size, location, age, and social cohesiveness of a particular community. Despite these variations, virtually every

14. U.O. Schmeltz and Sergio Della Pergola, "Some Basic Trends in the Demography of U.S. Jews: A Re-Examination." Paper prepared for AJC Conference on New Perspectives in American Jewish Sociology: Findings and Implications (New York: May, 1986).

15. Sidney Goldstein, "Jews in the United States: Perspectives from Demography," *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 81 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), pp. 3-59.

study in recent decades points to rising levels both of intermarriage among young, native-born Americans and of conversion to Judaism. But the evidence from quite recent studies suggests that both may have reached plateaus and that conversions may even be declining.

The results of the 1970-71 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS)<sup>16</sup> indicated that 7% of all Jews married at the time of the survey were in mixed marriages. This overall level was not unusually high, but the study also showed that intermarriages rose sharply from 4-5% of those marrying between 1950 and 1959 to 10% of the 1960-64 marriage cohort, and to 22% of those marrying in 1965-69.

The effect of intermarriage on demographic growth is largely determined by the extent of conversion to Judaism by the non-Jewish partner, as well as by the extent to which children born within such marriages are raised as Jews. Overall, the evidence from NJPS suggested that a substantial proportion of intermarriages resulted in the conversion of the non-Jew, especially among the younger groups having a higher intermarriage rate. In an even larger number, the non-Jewish spouse identified as Jewish. Furthermore, a significant proportion of children from such marriages, about half, were being raised as Jews.

In contrast to NJPS's relatively optimistic conclusions regarding the impact of intermarriage, a 1976-77 eight-city study of 446 intermarried couples concluded that intermarriage represented a threat to Jewish continuity.<sup>17</sup> The evidence pointed to low conversion rates, a low level of Jewish conduct and practice in mixed marriages, a low proportion of children being regarded as Jewish, and most of the children not being socialized as Jews. Although the study was not fully representative of all intermarrieds, it had considerable value in the stress that it gave to the need for outreach programs designed to provide more opportunities to enhance the Jewish content of the family life of the intermarried and, especially, to strengthen the likelihood that children will identify as Jews.

Among community studies undertaken since NJPS, rates of mixed marriage continue to vary inversely with age and are generally higher among younger persons than those reported in NJPS. The levels continue to differ considerably, however, from community to community. A reasonable estimate seems to be that the average current intermarriage rate for American Jews is between 25 and 30%, indicating that about 45% of all newly married couples involve a non-Jewish partner.

Two of the most recently completed community studies — Baltimore and Philadelphia<sup>18</sup> — show that intermarriage rates continue to follow

16. U.O. Schmeltz and Sergio Della Pergola, "The Demographic Consequences of U.S. Jewish Population Trends," *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 83 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), pp. 141-187.

17. Egon Mayer, *Children of Intermarriage. A Study in Patterns of Identification and Family Life* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1983).

18. Tobin, *A Demographic Study*, and Yancey and Goldstein, *The Jewish Population of the Greater Philadelphia Area*.

the patterns noted earlier. In Baltimore, 26% of all married persons age 35-44 and 36% of the youngest cohort, age 25-34, were not born Jewish; about 30% of the youngest marriage cohort involved conversion to Judaism. Also important to note is the evidence that 13% converted away from Judaism. In the 1984 Philadelphia study, the rate of intermarriage of Jews to persons not born Jewish was 27% of those between 30-39 and 38% of those between 18-29. Moreover, the percentage converting to Judaism decreased for the most recently intermarried cohort. Although about 30% of the marriages involving a non-Jew aged 40-49 resulted in a conversion, this was true of only 13% among those intermarrying of ages 18-29. Significantly, too, in Baltimore, less than a majority of the children in households without conversion were identified as Jewish. If rates of conversion are, in fact, declining and if most of the children in such marriages are not identifying as Jews, the impact of intermarriage on Jewish demographics may become more negative than in the past.

Because of the limitations in the data on intermarriage, however, these patterns are suggestive, at best. We do not yet know definitely if intermarriage leads to a quantitative gain or loss for the Jewish community. Of all the items that warrant further research, intermarriage undoubtedly rates among the very highest. And, as the views of various segments of the Jewish community diverge with respect to who among the intermarried and among their children should be counted as Jewish, the task of undertaking research on the subject will become even more complex.

### *Residential Mobility*

At a time when American Jewish fertility has reached what is probably its lowest level so far, and when intermarriage and assimilation may be threatening the demographic and socioreligious vitality of the community, increasing levels of population mobility and greater geographic dispersion nationally and locally are new threats and new challenges. About three-fourths of all adult Jews no longer live in their city of birth, and one-third of all adults have moved within the last five or six years. The levels of residential mobility implied by these statistics have serious implications for the national as well as the local communities.

For the first half of the twentieth century, Jews were heavily concentrated in the Northeast;<sup>19</sup> in 1930, 69% lived in the region. Compared to the general American population, proportionally fewer lived in the North Central and Southern regions, and about as small a proportion lived in the West. By 1984, the Jewish population was distributed more nearly like the total American population.<sup>20</sup> The Northeast still contained

19. See note 15.

20. Alvin Chenkin, "Jewish Population in the United States, 1984," *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 85 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), pp. 179-189.



a disproportional share of American Jewry (54%), but it had declined substantially, as had the percentage in the North Central region (11%). Growing percentages lived in the South (18%) and the West (16%).

Since the kinds of education obtained by American Jews and the kinds of occupations that they now enter often lead to movement away from family and out of centers of Jewish population concentration, these shifts in regional distribution are likely to become accentuated in the future. High level positions requiring repeated transfers may make it especially difficult for individuals and families to develop roots in any single Jewish community. If marriage age rises, if the propensity to marry declines, if the tendency for marital disruption rises, and if fertility levels remain low, conditions conducive to stability may decline even further. The migration effects of changing educational and occupational patterns may thus be compounded by changes in marital and fertility behavior.

The Jewish population is being redistributed not only across regions but also within and between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. Jewish residential clustering in a limited number of urban neighborhoods is changing as Jews participate in the general suburbanization movement. Jewish neighborhoods in central city areas and in older suburbs have experienced population decline as newer outer suburbs have grown. The population within given metropolitan areas has thereby become more dispersed. Many communities are finding it increasingly difficult to decide on a central location for institutions serving the community as a whole, and, in many areas, Jewish institutions have become located at widely separated points. Although residential clustering will continue in metropolitan areas with large Jewish populations, the greater dispersal and integration into the larger community that seem likely in the future may make it financially and organizationally difficult to provide services to the community's total population; they may also weaken the ties to Judaism that deeper residential roots encourage.

Jewish population movement must, therefore, be considered a key variable in any assessment of the future strength of the American-Jewish community. On the one hand, high levels of movement and, especially, repeated movement may weaken individual ties to local communities and institutions and reduce the strength of Jewish identity, compounding tendencies to high rates of intermarriage and assimilation. On the other hand, the shifts associated with population movement may give smaller communities the density and diversity of Jewish population needed to maintain and, possibly, strengthen basic institutions essential for group survival and enrichment.

Clearly, we need to learn much more about the impact of population dispersal and reconcentration on the strength of individual Jewish identity and on the viability of individual communities and of the American-Jewish community as a whole. Migration, rather than fertility and intermarriage, may well be the key dynamic affecting the vitality of Jewish

communities in the next several decades. Until we have more insights on its full implications and the extent to which policies can be designed to cope with them, dealing with this key demographic process may remain one of the major challenges that the community faces.

### *Structural Variables*

While size, distribution, and density are critical variables determining the strength and vitality of any segment of the population, a wide range of demographic, social, and economic variables also significantly affects the community's current viability and future survival. Among these, age and generation status have particular relevance for the Jews. Emerging as an added variable is the potential religious polarization of the community.

Of all the demographic variables, age is the most basic. Since at least the 1950s, the Jewish population of the United States has had an older age structure than the general white population. U.O. Schmeltz and Della Pergola<sup>21</sup> estimated that, by 1980, over 15% of America's Jews were aged 65 and over; they projected a rise to 17% by the year 2000. Equally significant is the projected sharp increase in the "old aged" (75 and over) from about 314,000 in 1980 to 414,000 in the year 2000. Beyond the impact on growth rates that the high levels of overall mortality associated with an aged population will entail, aging will pose special challenges for the Jewish community to find the financial resources necessary to cope with increasing needs for health and social services, especially if a noticeable proportion of Jewish aged live below the poverty level.

A major factor affecting the continued vitality of the American Jewish community in the past has been the "transfusions" received through immigration. Now, increasingly, third and fourth generation Jews face the American scene without large-scale outside reinforcement. Although this emergent pattern has been somewhat modified in recent decades by the influx of Jews from the Soviet Union, Israel, and Iran, the full extent to which this immigration affects the demographic composition and sociological character of American Jewry, especially at the local level, remains to be documented. These groups may add to the number of Jews or at least compensate some for population declines. However, due either to deficiencies in Jewish background and experience or to lack of integration with the organized Jewish community, their numerical contribution may not be matched by contributions to other aspects of Jewish communal life. Despite the influx of Russian and Israeli immigrants, the foreign-born component is clearly decreasing over time. In most communities, it now constitutes only between 11 and 18%.<sup>22</sup>

The sharp changes in the generational composition of the popula-

21. See note 16.

22. See note 16.



tion suggest that the community's future depends to a great degree on how its third and higher generation members react to the freedom to integrate into the American social structure. Whether trends toward assimilation are being stabilized, reversed, or accelerated, and how the expression of ties to the Jewish community is changing require continuing monitoring and assessment for their implications both for individual identity and for the strength of the larger community.

Concerns with effects of changing patterns of demographic growth and composition may pale in the shadow of what could be a much more serious change for American Jewry. What may be particularly relevant as we approach the 21st century is, to use Irving Greenberg's key question: "Will there be one Jewish people by the year 2000?" If sociological forces are left unchecked, he warns, "the Jewish people will be split apart into two, mutually divided hostile groups who are unable or unwilling to marry each other."<sup>23</sup>

Will divisions stemming from different attitudes toward conversion, patrilineal descent, and divorce so affect the definition of who is a Jew that a substantial segment of the projected 5.0 to 5.5 million American Jews may have their status as Jews questioned by another segment? If as many as 15-20% of all Jews were to be classified as marginal, as Greenberg suggests, the implications for the unity of the American Jewish community and for the potential assimilation of those outside the core group would be very serious indeed. Such polarization of the community would have critical implications for social interaction among Jews, for survival as one people and, finally, for survival demographically at a level at which we can remain a key segment, not only of the total American community, but of world Jewry. From a research perspective, such a situation would add immensely to the complex tasks of defining and measuring intermarriage and of ascertaining the actual number of Jews in the United States.

### *Conclusion*

Whether American Jewry faces greater assimilation or is transforming itself into a different but still dynamic community is the focus of ongoing debate. In this, its future demographics are a key concern. In combination, the current patterns of low fertility, high levels of intermarriage, lowered residential density, and changing composition can potentially weaken the demographic base of the United States Jewish population. This need not be so. To the extent that Jews retain a comparatively close-knit, ethnic-religious identification within the total society, the potential for continued vitality remains. Stability of numbers or even declining numbers need not constitute a fundamental threat to the maintenance of a strong Jewish community and to high levels of individual Jewish identity.

23. Irving Greenberg, "Jews in the Year 2000," *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*, July, 1985.

A stable or larger population base would certainly make the effort to ensure Jewish identity and vitality easier. Concern with numbers is especially relevant at the local level. It is unlikely, however, that the Jewish community can do very much to control the changing fertility levels or the patterns of redistribution, since these processes very largely reflect reactions to a wide and complex range of social, economic, and normative changes in the larger American society. What is perhaps more important is that the community undertake and maintain fuller and more scientifically sound assessments of the implications of the whole range of demographic developments, and that it is prepared, on the basis of such evaluations, to develop new institutional forms designed, at a minimum, to mitigate the negative effects of population decline and dispersal. Ideally, these efforts should also increase opportunities for Jewish self-identification and for greater participation of individuals in organized Jewish life. Through such steps, the community will help insure that the changes that do occur will still allow for a meaningful balance between being Jewish and being American.

# *The Jewish Family: Lights and Shadows*

YEHUDA ROSENMAN

APART FROM ISRAEL, NO SUBJECT HAS DOMINATED recent Jewish conventions and journals as emphatically as has the Jewish family. And properly so, for the future of the Jewish people will depend on the stability of both the Jewish state and the Jewish family. Despite frequent discussion and occasional handwringing about the fate of the Jewish family, however, we cannot agree on policies, strategies, and programs for enhancing it. Nor do we have either a common understanding of the role of the family in the development and maintenance of Jewish identity, or an agreed assessment of the trends in Jewish family life and the implications of their meaning and impact on the future size and quality of Jewish life.

In recent years, two main schools of thought have evolved among sociologists of American Jewry. They may be described as “pessimists” and “optimists.” Representatives of the two schools differ on many issues concerning the future of the Jewish community, on how to interpret present trends and in their prognosis for the future. However, for our purposes and for the sake of brevity, we may limit the discussion to two issues: family size and intermarriage.

## *Family Size*

The “pessimists” see a definite down-trend in the Jewish birthrate to a point of continuing demographic decrease. Some of them predict a 25% drop in the American Jewish population by the beginning of the 21st century. These estimates are based on the discerned development of a 20% rate of never-married Jewish singles and a continuing trend on the part of married couples to be on the verge of, or below, reproducing themselves, i.e., 1.5 children per couple. No marriage, delayed marriage and low birth rate are seen as sociologically predictable phenomena that correlate with higher education, high economic attainment, women’s entrance into the work force and secularism.

This view asserts the significance of numbers for two reasons: dwindling numbers weaken the infra-structures by decreased funds and human resources, coupled with considerable increases in the needs of resources to service the elderly, an ever-rising demographic bulge. The second fear is that a decreased Jewish population may result in a diminu-

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tion of Jewish political influence and clout in a majoritarian democracy. Such a development may bring about an erosion in Jewish identity and self-esteem because the risks may be perceived to be high.

The “optimists” are not concerned about the effects of a low Jewish birthrate. In their view, Jews have always had lower birth rates than have other groups. Furthermore, Jews always placed importance on quality and not quantity, being a very small minority within large Gentile majorities. In any case, birth rates are unpredictable, cyclical phenomena and there is nothing that the community can do about them.

### *Intermarriage*

The “pessimists” view the rise in intermarriage with alarm, predicting a decrease in the number of America’s Jews. Within the family context, intermarriage is seen as an important cause of weakening the Jewish family and diluting its Jewish quality and content, not to speak of the many offspring who will probably assimilate. Furthermore, the present roughly 25% of non-Jews in intermarriages who do convert will most probably decrease as a result of the ever-increasing number of Jewish women who intermarry. Relatively few non-Jewish males have converted until now. The recent patrilineal descent decision by the Reconstructionist and Reform groups will predictably decrease the rate of conversion even further.

The “optimists” analyze the intermarriage data differently and reject the high rate that has been persistently claimed. They consider the sizeable numbers of non-Jews who convert, along with the many Jews in mixed-marriages who continue to identify Jewishly, as a plus rather than a minus for the Jewish family and Jewish community. In this view, what appears to be a thinning out or watering down of Jewishness in intermarried families may, instead, represent a radical change in fourth and fifth generation American Jews in the nature and quality of their Jewishness. These Jews may be developing new Jewish idioms and new, more creative and meaningful ways of believing and expressing their faith.

The perceptions and prognoses of these two schools of sociological thought must be confusing, if not bewildering, to laypeople. Do these sociologists look at the same data? If not, what are the different data that the two groups use? Do they look at the same data but interpret them differently or are we witnessing selections and interpretations that are informed by ideological biases? Then again, one wonders to what extent the prognoses are based on speculation. For example, with regard to intermarriage, lacking longitudinal studies, how can one predict a plus net result for the Jewish community against all historical precedent?

Indeed, the historical experience and recent data, even those used by the “optimists,” indicate that the Jewish family is in flux and has changed to the point where one might ask whether it can perform all of those nur-

turing and Jewish continuity tasks that we have come to expect of it. One tends increasingly to believe that one of the reasons for our confusion and discord in looking at the family may lie in the obfuscated and partisan perspectives that many bring to the subject.

In keeping with our liberal, pragmatic American orientation, our family-centered discussions usually yield instrumental recommendations: day-care centers, or flexible work schedules, or the like. We feel comfortable with such recommendations probably because they are familiar; they reflect decades of American social programs and both scholarly and popular treatments of the subject. Our analysis of the problems of the family is similarly conditioned: in our common wisdom, insufficient income and inadequate communal services appear to account for the low birthrate, the high divorce rate, and most of the other ills that plague contemporary families.

But is this familiar approach effective? Does it address the specific problem that we confront?; and does it lead us toward constructive responses? Not entirely.

The inadequacy of an instrumental perspective appears even more clearly in the data of recent social experiences. The Scandinavian and other countries which enjoy splendid welfare, health, and child-care services, for example, have not been able to maintain family stability or an adequate birthrate. And, in the United States, family size does not increase with higher income. In fact, the reverse is true; poorer people have larger families. Ironically, one may suggest that American Jews are among the best examples of this phenomenon; indeed, there is growing evidence of affluent Jewish couples staying childless by choice or having only one child. The malaise of the family will not yield to our instrumental approach, for its causes are historical and ideological. Space is limited to describe fully the historical process that, since the industrial revolution, has altered the condition of the family. But one needs to outline the process briefly by noting the shifts that have taken place in a little more than a century: from an agrarian to an industrial economy, and from a rural to an urban culture. In keeping with these changes, values that affect the way we see the family have also changed. The societal forces since the industrial revolution have been powerfully centrifugal, pulling members away from the family core. Most changes have been rather rapid and have continuously weakened the centrality of the family as a source of protection, economic dependence and emotional and spiritual support. Let us comment on just a few quite familiar changes for the purpose of focus.

### 1. *Urbanization*

The development of industry and large commercial enterprises brought about the creation of ever larger urban centers, moving great numbers of people from farms, villages and small towns and cities. In this

process, familiar structures were destroyed, while roots, values and family culture were supplanted. Urbanization in our time ultimately brought about millions of uprooted, lonely and alienated people.

## 2. *Economics*

Until modern times, the family depended largely on itself and its extensions for food, shelter and other maintenance needs, whether in farming or cottage industries in the home. In that culture every family member had a productive task and children were considered a blessing and an important asset. Today, however, family members are pulled away from home for various individual economic pursuits and do not need the family to survive. Children thus become a liability and often a nuisance, an interference. Today, we periodically read reports on how much it costs to raise a child through the college years and the figures are rising: \$120,000, \$150,000 and so on. A child does become a frightfully expensive commodity and one can imagine the impact which such a monetary approach to evaluating children could have on a young couple who may never have seen a thousand dollars, let alone \$150,000.

## 3. *Longevity*

Longevity has profoundly impacted on the structure, roles and relationships of family members. Only at the turn of the century the average life span in the United States was forty years. Today, it is approaching twice that. Nowadays it is not unusual to have four living family generations and, in some instances, five. This revolutionary change has changed some of the traditional roles of family members and, while expanding the network of relationships, it has also produced ambivalences, uncertainties, and often confusion within those relationships.

High longevity may also be contributing to increases in divorce. When life could end at forty, spouses were totally immersed in the struggle for economic survival and in raising their children and by the time these tasks were achieved, one or both of the parents had passed away. Today, when children are grown, some spouses wish to launch new careers and be rejuvenated by new love affairs and divorces.

## 4. *Love*

The emergence, relatively recently, of romantic love as an unquestionable condition of marriage has been another revolutionary change that has profoundly affected the family and its stability. From time immemorial, the criteria for choosing a mate were usually appropriate background or lineage, economic and social status, personality traits, education, health and physical appearance. Romantic love was not a prerequisite, and one wonders whether we moderns know what it is. A recent

study on the causes of Jewish divorces that was conducted by the American Jewish Committee showed a lack of clarity about the reasons for most of them, and many of the couples could articulate only vague notions of incompatibility and the fading of romantic love.

### 5. *Feminism and Women at Work*

Probably one of the main recent developments that has dramatically changed the family and the roles of men and women has been the feminist movement and the almost universal entrance of Jewish women into the labor market. This phenomenon has greatly contributed to a decrease in the marriage rate, to late marriages, high divorce rate, the decrease in the size of family and the high level of intermarriage.

### 6. *Secularism*

The confrontation in modern times between science and secular humanism on the one hand and religious beliefs and practices on the other, has brought about fundamental changes in the family. Until secularization, which places unlimited power and faith in people as the ultimate judges of right and wrong, or of relationship systems among people, human values had a transcendental basis. In a religious system men and women knew what was expected of them and what their role was in the world. Among these ascribed values was the commandment to marry and have children. The weakening of the religious belief system let in a flood of views, confusions and conflicts whose result has been the transformation of the family.

An attempt has been made to list and to comment briefly on what are considered to be some of the objective, historical processes which have strongly impacted on the family. It would obviously serve no purpose to evaluate these historic forces and processes from the perspective of good or bad. In this sense these forces are "objective," and we can do very little about them. But before we arrive at conclusions we should examine what we call a "subjective" phenomenon of recent vintage which began about twenty-five years ago as the "counter culture." "Subjective" phenomena deal with values and a climate of opinion that we might be able to change. The "counter culture," as we will recall, began with an anti-establishment protest movement against American involvement in Vietnam. From the Berkeley campus riots demanding free speech, the "flower" children on the streets of San Francisco advocating "make love and not war," the proliferation of the use of drugs as a liberating, rarefying escape to nirvana, to the takeover and exploitation of the young by hard core revolutionaries, the counter culture challenged and threatened the very foundation of our free, democratic society which has always been governed by law and not by the whims of individuals or groups. However, what turned out to be a greater threat, because it has largely succeeded, has been the intro-

duction of new, revolutionary values or of valueless social and cultural perceptions of a way of life. We consider the “counter culture” way of life as having largely succeeded because it has permeated and penetrated most social, economic and age groups as normative values and behavior. Some of its main features are equally characteristic of the “yuppie” phenomenon, and it has even penetrated into some religious institutions as well, some ministers and rabbis having become its apologists, if not its exponents.

What, in brief, is this “counter culture” way of life? It represents a contemporary version of paganism and hedonism. In this view, men and women were put on this earth for a temporary sojourn whose purpose is the pursuit of continuous satisfaction and pleasure (it feels good), instantaneous gratification, accumulation of comfort, wealth and power and the achievement of eternal youth and prowess. Relativistic values and morality are used to rationalize this exaggerated individualism and hedonistic self-fulfillment. For example, while there have always been crooks and thieves, they were shunned and punished by society. It was the “counter culture,” however, that introduced the concept and the terminology of “rip off” as a perfectly acceptable, if not an admirable, behavior. Pagan, orgiastic practices have been made known through press, journals and TV and glorified through the proliferation of thousands of sex clinics to improve orgasm. Several billion dollars a year are spent in this country for cosmetic plastic surgery (it feels and looks better) in the pursuit of eternal youth.

It is needless to state that the “counter culture” is not only antithetical to Judaism, but represents a death knell to marriage, raising children and maintaining a stable family. For the latter, in complete contrast to “counter culture,” requires a life orientation and value system that are based on giving, sharing, postponing gratification and possessing a full sense of personal and social responsibility. In Freudian terms, what is required is a great deal of the “ego” and the “super ego” and the control of the “id.”

It should be clear by now that instrumental approaches will not solve family issues for we are dealing with fundamental value orientations that influence behavior. What is necessary are educated and courageous leaders who will recognize the urgency to counteract the eroding values in our world. This is recognizably a most difficult, and some would say impossible, task. However, we are not free to desist from it and we should begin with the Jewish community.

First, we should make the protection and enhancement of the family our most important communal priority and concerted efforts should be undertaken in this direction. We should place on our agenda five major objectives:

1. Jewish men and women should be encouraged and helped to marry.
2. Jewish married couples should be encouraged and helped to have



at least three children. It should be noted, for the sake of avoiding misunderstanding, that the above two objectives are not intended to ostracize or “guilt-out” people who, for health or other reasons, cannot marry or have children. They are urged for Jewish communal, educational and enabling efforts and not as direct preachment to individuals.

3. The Jewish community should help to maintain marriages and prevent breakups.

4. Every Jewish family should be helped to educate and socialize its children Jewishly, for other institutions can supplement that task but they cannot be complete substitutes.

5. The Jewish community should elevate parenting as the noblest, most satisfying, creative, and imaginative task of a person's lifetime.

While these five Jewish communal objectives reflect basic Judaic teachings, they also reflect an existential, contemporary reality to meet the needs of people. They challenge the Jewish community to oppose the corrosive forces and values that endanger Jewish survival and they call it to struggle for the minds and hearts of Jewish children. Admittedly, the suggestions for communal directions and programs are broad and general, consistent with the nature and approach of this paper. It might help the reader, however, if by way of example, a few specific suggestions were added of what the community could do.

In a conscious and planned way, community agencies could honor individuals and families whose practices and lifestyles symbolise the objectives discussed above. Jewish schools should develop units of study about the family for children and for the family as a whole. Fees for Jewish schools, camps, community centers, trips to Israel should be set to make the programs accessible to all. Jewish day care centers for children aged three to five should be organized with fees that are easily affordable, especially to large families. Similarly, after-school programs should be developed for “latchkey” children. Older adults could be trained and involved in helping with pre-school children of working parents, especially infants and toddlers below the age of three.

The task which we confront is difficult. We will have to hammer out policies, strategies, and programs to implement these five imperatives. We will need to consider how to create a Jewish climate of opinion to influence the young; every agency and organization in every avenue of activity will have to engage in this task. It will demand education — both formal and informal, beginning in early childhood and continuing through adulthood. It will also demand the creation of powerful models and symbols, as well as specific services and supports, on a community-wide coordinated basis. In the beginning, however, these five communal imperatives themselves can serve as an effective educational tool, to provoke thought, discussion, and reaction. As we consider this new perspective on the problems of the family, the process of solving that problem will have begun.

# *Jewish Community Centers: Builders of the Jewish Future*

ESTHER LEAH RITZ

PESSIMISM AND PESSIMISTS ARE A LIABILITY in the survival game. They predict a dire future and their behavior, dictated logically by their expectations, helps to fulfill their prophecies. The Jewish community, they say, is hemorrhaging: by the turn of the century, there will be only a miniscule Jewish population in the free Diaspora — perhaps a million or so. Assimilation, intermarriage, the blandishments of the open societies in which we live — but not *aliyah* — will cause this loss.

Their prescription, by and large, is to focus on intensifying the knowledge and involvement of those most committed to Jewish life and, in effect, to write off the overwhelming majority of the Jewish world. They come to believe that *only* intensive study in day schools and yeshivot will guarantee that the surviving remnant will be deeply Jewish.

Intensive study and interpretation of Jewish texts are, in fact, a necessity for Jewish survival. The people of the Book must not abandon study and the high levels of scholarship. Jewish communal institutions committed to survival must involve as many as possible in these enterprises.

But let those who wish to limit themselves to such activities remember, however, the creativity and (dare I use the word) flexibility of Talmud scholars over the millennia. Without these additional characteristics, Jewry would have become a narrow sect; Judaism would be archaic.

At no time in Jewish history were all Jews scholars. It is highly unlikely that even all devout Jews have the capacity to be scholars. There will always be varying degrees of knowledge, connection and commitment, which means that some Jews will be at the core of scholarship, totally immersed in Jewish law and lore, while others will be on the periphery.

A family which believes, in the current mode, that being Jewish is the same as being “human” has no motivation to send its children to day school, let alone to join and participate in synagogue life. There is no exposure to the unique qualities of Judaism which require Jews to be more than humanists. Even more sadly, they see only the hardships of being Jews, having been conditioned by the *schrei Gewalt* school of Jewish identity: the worse things are for Jews, the better. But such people are not

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anti-Jewish. They can be helped to understand both the joys and the responsibilities of being a Jew.

The Jewish Community Center movement of North America and JWB, its continental instrument, consist of optimists who do not accept the dire view of the future. Their perspective, stated simply, is that in open societies, where remaining a functioning Jew is a matter of choice — a voluntary decision — as many doors as possible must be kept open in order to invite Jews to opt *in* instead of *out*.

To that end, beginning in 1983, JWB undertook an examination of the opportunities and barriers, the capacities and limitations, for Jewish Community Centers as educational settings. The Commission on Maximizing the Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers (COMJEE) and its successor Committee on Implementation have developed the framework and confirmed the need and feasibility for Centers to open wider some of the doors into the Jewish community through which additional thousands of Jews can come to make their connection with Jewish life.

A major achievement of JWB's process was the development of an all-encompassing definition of Jewish education, as a framework for determining what Centers could best contribute to a common endeavor:

Jewish education is a lifelong process of acquiring Jewish knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Its goals are to help individuals develop and reinforce positive Jewish identity and participate intelligently in Jewish life.

Jewish education takes place in the home, synagogue, classroom, Center and wherever efforts are made to awaken and deepen the sense of Jewish belonging, to motivate the pursuit of Jewish knowledge and to give expression to Jewish beliefs, practices and values.

Pursuant to that definition, the COMJEE report then summarizes the special role of the JCC, and how it can be acted out:

The Jewish Community Center is uniquely equipped to reinforce and contribute to the Jewish educational process. Its special education role results in part from its community-sponsored setting where Jewish people of all ages and various ideological orientations can come together. Similarly, the Center's uniqueness stems from its involvement of Jews in life experiences that both educate and motivate the pursuit of Jewish enrichment. Centers fulfill their educational function with trained professionals from a variety of fields: social work, education, the arts, etc. They apply their skills and talents to develop programs and services that involve people in constructive experiences, and enable and stimulate personal, social and Jewish growth.

The Commission identified a set of requirements for local centers if they are to increase their educational effectiveness:

1. Center lay leadership that really cares about its educational mission and is willing to provide the personnel and financial resources that are needed. This requirement sets firm criteria for board member

recruitment and board development programs to guarantee leadership committed to the Jewish purposes of the Center.

2. Center professional staffs with the desire and capacity to develop effective and innovative Jewish educational programs. This requirement must also be reflected in both recruitment and in-service development of professionals. It focuses especially on the importance of the executive staff of the Center, who must take the lead as role models, designers and implementers of new programs. These are not mere aspirations; great movement has already occurred. By 1990 or so, the entire professional staff of JWB itself, and most of the 2,200 person professional complement of the field, will have participated in intensive and extensive enrichment study programs in Israel, which will not only strengthen their own knowledge and understanding, but enhance access to many new and expanded programmatic resources.

3. Strengthening of inter-agency cooperation and support in Jewish educational programming. One of the troublesome aspects of the original study and of implementation efforts was that of "turf." The fact of the matter, and one that other institutions have clearly begun to accept in many major communities, is that there is room and need for more than one agency or group of institutions to address the problems of Jewish identity today. Collaboration must be the vehicle not for demarcation of limits, but, rather, for identification and planning for the filling of gaps. The role of Federations in encouraging such collaborative initiatives is, and will be, ever more critical. They must, first of all, endorse the concept of the Center as a Jewish educational institution, and participate, even sometimes initiate, the processes and structures which will improve inter-agency programming. JWB will continue to join efforts with the Council of Jewish Federations, Jewish Educational Services of North America, the American Zionist Youth Foundation, continental synagogue bodies and others to encourage, through the continental perspective, local efforts in cooperation.

4. Interpretation of the educational role of Centers in every community. The image of the Center as a swimming pool and a *schvitz* is less than the truth; for almost forty years, since the Janowsky report in 1948, Centers have been moving — albeit too slowly — toward the objective of active involvement in re-Judaizing American Jewry. That process has now culminated in the COMJEE report, which, in turn, has become the launching pad for major and accelerated efforts to achieve that goal.

As a result of the efforts over the last several years, both JWB and its affiliated JCCs and YM-YWHAs are now ready to participate as full partners in the task of ensuring the Jewish future. They are better prepared, through experiential and informal activities, to reach out to individuals and families with only the most tenuous connection with the community. At the same time, they are developing programs which can bring together the most Jewishly sophisticated among us, representing the broad gamut

of orientations to Jewish life for the purpose of interaction and understanding, but not of homogenization.

Center camps, serving children from a broad spectrum of orientation and knowledge, are a miracle to behold in this era of divisiveness and recrimination. They prove that Jews can live together with mutual respect, in spite of differences. Other Center programs, operated independently or, increasingly, on a collaborative basis with such entities as day schools, Boards of Jewish Education, synagogues and adult Jewish organizations of various kinds, have established that cooperation is not only possible, but essential to combine the strengths of the whole range of such institutions for the common purpose.

This new, clearer sense of mission and the new program thrusts which it will produce will not turn Jewish Community Centers into another set of schools. On the contrary, the next half-century should see a major revolution in the ways in which Jews learn about themselves, their history and their future. Formal educational entities — full-time day schools as well as congregational schools — will incorporate into the teaching process many of the informal and experiential techniques which accelerate learning. And Centers may add to their menus of activities more of the intensive and structured methodologies which more advanced participants in programs will seek.

But Centers will continue to operate health and physical recreation programs, to fulfill the Jewish imperative of physical health, and to keep open — even to open wider — one of the main entry points into the Center and into the Jewish community. They will broaden their cultural activities, as a major educational tool for both participants and audiences, and add a specifically Jewish presence in the general cultural life of their communities.

Time after time the Jewish people have faced the possibility of annihilation from without or disintegration from within. We have looked, at various times in our history, to kings, prophets, rabbis and scholars for leadership, and we will continue to do so. But we have also relied, over the centuries, on the attachment of the millions who were none of these things but who, through their devotion, and reinforced by as much learning as they have had time and inclination to absorb, have refused to disappear from history. Jewish Community Centers stand ready to enrich the Jewish life of those millions — into the next century.

# *Fund Raising In The Future*

STANLEY B. HOROWITZ

TO SPECULATE ON THE FUTURE OF JEWISH fund raising is to speculate on the future of the Jewish condition. In one number, the Jewish fund raising result suggests the level of Jewish consciousness and commitment, the state of Jewish security or peril, the economic well-being of the Jewish people, the unity or disunity within the community, and the consensus about the quality of our institutions and their inclusiveness.

An historical pattern is discernible in the United Jewish Appeal/ Federation Campaign which can be used as a barometer, as that single effort probably comprises at least one half of annual Jewish giving. Since 1939, giving to this campaign has progressed predictably according to the economy and other normal factors. However, huge leaps were made when Israel was at war or particular projects, like Operation Moses or Project Renewal, demanded special funding. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon will continue into the 21st century.

One has the impression that wealth continues to be accumulated by Jewish philanthropists at an unprecedented rate. The popular magazine lists of wealthy Americans tell one part of the story; the large increase in six and seven figure gifts by Jewish Americans tells another part. This accumulated wealth has combined with the uniquely American idea of the charitable foundation — formerly the province of “super-rich” American industrialists — to create, potentially, the most powerful force in Jewish giving for the century ahead: it would not be fantasy to predict the formation, by the year 2,000, of a \$3 billion pool representing foundations established by Jewish individuals and Federation endowment funds. This will provide the underpinning, together with increased annual giving, for expanded financial resources in the 21st century.

The Jewish philanthropic impulse and the means will be there, but what of the motivation? In America’s open society, there have already been substantial gifts by Jews to universities, museums and other cultural and non-sectarian activities. This is one by-product of a healthy acceptance — not complete, but significant — of the Jew in American society. Jewish causes, therefore, will have to be even more attractive.

The most compelling attraction for Jewish giving is Israel. There is nothing in Jewish history that has struck such a responsive chord, that has built a sense of Jewish security in an all too hostile world. There was never a doubt that all Jews share responsibility for an Israel that has gathered in

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the exiles, brought in and cared for the Jews who survived World War II, successfully absorbed our brothers and sisters with different backgrounds from all over the world, and built a stable, democratic society.

But there has emerged among some American Jews — many of them major financial supporters — a more sober view, in contrast to the idealized Israel of yesterday. There has been a perceptible change in Israel's image in the aftermath of the Lebanon campaign called the "Peace in the Galilee," the development of the "Peace Now" movement, and the growth of extremist elements. Internally, Israel, like any dynamic modern society, will continue to experience social and economic strains such as those now reflected in population changes caused by *aliyah* and *yeridah*, and the balance between Jews and Arabs; in the struggle over religious pluralism among Jews which almost approaches the level of internecine warfare; and in the society's inner tensions between the advantaged and disadvantaged, the Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and the political parties. Of even more direct concern to the American Jewish contributor is the continuing need to define and re-define the Jewish Agency, whose role has been so decisive in linking the Diaspora with the people of Israel.

In short, Israel, while remaining the central fact of Jewish existence, will attract American Jewish financial support based not only on the positive and even passionate instincts of the contributors but also on their judgment of her merits. And the judgment will be made in the year 2000 by persons with no personal experience of a world without Israel, nor of the catastrophe that befell a Jewish people with no home of its own.

Will the judgment lead to greater giving? Yes, at times of crisis; perhaps, during normal times. Much will depend upon whether there will be: a consensus that Israel is the land of the whole Jewish people and that there are some issues where Diaspora Jews should be included seriously in decision making; a greater opportunity for Israelis and Diaspora Jews to interact; a carefully defined program for improving the quality of life in Israel with shared responsibility for it by Israelis and Diaspora Jews; and an integrated program to replace the seemingly endless number of Israeli causes now seeking American Jewish support.

Overseas there will be continuing requirements in some countries. By far the largest factor that we hope will emerge will be the ultimate release of all Soviet Jews who wish to leave. This could be the greatest opportunity and, at the same time, the most compelling motivation for Jewish giving — not only to fund their emigration in the next few years, but also their absorption in Israel in the decades beyond.

The *sine qua non* of American Jewish community organization and fund raising is very well captured in the recent UJA slogan, "We Are One." Making one gift to the UJA/Federation campaign for Israeli, domestic and overseas Jewish needs has become universally accepted. Therefore, to complete the picture of motivating factors one must look at the domestic side. After World War II and until the 1970s there was an



explosive growth in Jewish-sponsored agencies. The dramatic appeal of our hospitals and homes for the aged, and the move to the suburbs of the centers and synagogues constituted a major call on Jewish philanthropy. New facilities were built and enlarged operations were funded.

Since the mid-seventies there has been a change, and this direction will continue. More money will be needed to maintain the new emphasis on the quality of Jewish life and, thus, on the programs of formal and informal Jewish education. These programs address the enhancement of Judaism and Jewishness, the special requirements of the large incidence of intermarriage and persons who become "Jews by choice," and the deepened concern with the quality of Jewish family life. By the 21st century, some of these additional funds will be made available by shifting moneys now allocated by federations to the support of Jewish-sponsored health and social services, by efficiencies resulting from the continuing trend towards sharing of facilities by temples, synagogues and/or Jewish agencies, by mergers of potentially synergistic organizations and agencies, and by privatization of carefully selected communal agencies.

Other domestic demands for new financial support could emerge from major demographic changes (again!), renewed anti-Semitism, or serious invasion of other Jewish or democratic rights. It also seems likely that the very large Jewish communities of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and perhaps others will continue to face the problems of the Jewish poor, the homeless, and the aged. While the national proportion of aged to the total population is about 12% today, it is expected to reach at least 21% by 2030; the proportion for the Jewish community will be even larger. And if experience is a teacher, many of the aged will be sick and/or poor, thus requiring substantial financial resources.

In the past, the Jewish community has been spared much of the financial demands for these latter fundamental human needs, since they were assumed to be a governmental responsibility. But this philosophy has changed and, by the 21st century, the Jewish community must resolve the dual question that has, to date, limited a communal response to the Jewish poor: (1) Can the voluntary sector meet what is essentially a governmental responsibility? Can the Jewish community raise the very substantial funds required by this governmental default? Even if it can, would it then be encouraging government to abrogate its responsibility, and (2) Is Jewish homelessness and poverty in America a national Jewish problem to be met by the collective fund-raising effort of the American Jewish community or, as in the past and present, should it be left for those communities where the problem exists to finance it by themselves?

Jewish dilemmas and questions can be resolved either by consensus or confrontation. The prioritizing and funding of Israeli, overseas, and domestic needs will be easily accomplished in periods of crisis. But in times when "all other things are equal," allocations of what will always be — no matter how much is raised — the scarce Jewish philanthropic dollar



in the 21st century will be increasingly characterized by both science and statesmanship.

Science should be the “easy” part. Modern technology will be used to measure relative need among various groups, quality of service, cost-benefit factors, and projection of future requirements taking into account both external (e.g., the economy) and internal (e.g., intermarriage rates) factors. This increasing sophistication should also permit the development of much improved data bases which should assure the factoring in of Jewish demographic change.

But it will be the quality of statesmanship among Jewish leaders, as they pursue the Jewish interests closest to their hearts, that will be decisive. Will they be sensitive to the differing passions of others and seek compromise and consensus? It seems possible that in the years immediately preceding the 21st century we may learn the price that is paid when statesmanship is in too short supply. By the year 2000 it should be increasingly the *gestalt* of Jewish life — *klal Yisrael* — that will command the attention of leaders. They will act on the belief that there is more that we have in common than there is that tears us apart. The alternative — conflict and disunity — leads to difficulties in solving routine problems, disunity at times of crisis, and a climate that is self-defeating for fund raising.

And thus we come full circle: what is done in fund raising affects planning, allocations and budgeting, and the managing of these processes affects successful fund raising. In the 21st century, the need will be there and the case will be made; moreover, by today's standards great wealth will be available. New strategies will recognize (1) that, in Israel and domestically, we must raise the level of confidence in our institutions and our central values; (2) that we are increasingly a national Jewish community which may require more of a national campaign focus by local federations; (3) that some major donors of the future will seek to “follow the dollar” and should be offered important Jewish programs for which they can guide planning and implementation, have their names attached, and, in the process, gain more satisfaction from giving; (4) that campaigns should be focused on meeting specific challenges and solving clearly articulated problems; (5) that changing Jewish demography must be taken into account in marketing campaigns; and (6) that, above all, both professional and volunteer leaders must be planfully identified and groomed to carry on this critical work with statesmanship.

The Jewish community has established a remarkable record of relief, rehabilitation and even State building; community building; program creation; and fund raising during the 20th century. Conjecture is useful. But the practical conclusion is that the issues which have been identified and others which we cannot even guess at, will be resolved by the young Jewish men and women who, between 1987 and 2000, commit and apply themselves to the never-dull life of the Jewish world. Thus, there is now an opportunity for the emerging generation to participate in shaping a Jewish world which will be theirs to lead.

## II.

# ***Controversial Issues In Religion***

## ***Religious Pluralism: A Problem Or A Solution?***

**SOL ROTH**

PLURALISM IS A SOCIOLOGICAL PHENOMENON; it need not be an ideological commitment. It is a fact that the Jewish community includes a variety of groups whose patterns of conduct are mutually incompatible. Some regard this arrangement as desirable and worthy of pursuit; they believe that if it did not exist, it would be advantageous to strive for it. Others argue that, while pluralism may indeed be endemic to American Jewish life, the preservation of uniformity in Jewish commitment and conduct is really a desideratum of Jewish existence.

Unity, on the other hand, although variously interpreted, is an ideal almost universally endorsed. It is close to being an indispensable condition of Jewish survival. The crucial question is whether unity can be preserved in a communal context of pluralism and diversity. We will identify the factors that render pluralism in American Jewish life inevitable and the conditions in which the Jewish community can remain united despite its pluralistic character.

American democracy not only allows, but encourages, pluralism. The very essence of the democratic posture is a commitment to individualism which, in a democratic context, means the right of each individual to express his views, though they may be unpopular, and to act in a strange and alien manner so long as his behavior does not interfere with the rights of others to conduct their lives according to their own inclinations.

But, in addition, democracy encourages variety in religious, political, even moral commitments. It believes pluralism to be advantageous to the

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life of a social community. John Stuart Mill argues that freedom of speech is indispensable to the well being of society because it allows for the expression of different views and the collision of conflicting opinions which, in turn, inevitably lead to the discovery of truth. He writes that

... the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity to exchange error for truth: if wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.<sup>1</sup>

It could be argued, in an analogous way and with equal cogency, that the exemplification of different patterns of conduct among its various groups will also enrich the life of society. It is well known that when two alien cultures interact, the marks of each are invariably left on the other and many maintain that, as a consequence, both are mutually enriched.

## II

Classical Judaism, on the other hand, advocates uniformity of conduct in Jewish life. It allows and, indeed, encourages differences in views, so long as these do not conflict with Judaism's fundamental principles, but it laments the fact that historic conditions of Jewish life frequently rendered pluralism inevitable. Maimonides associates the phenomenon of pluralism with the destruction of the Temple and the removal of the Sanhedrin from its seat of authority. When it occupied that seat, scholars who disputed its decisions and acted according to their own dissenting opinion did so at their own peril. Maimonides writes:

When the Great Court existed, there was no conflict in the Jewish community ... When the Great Court was abolished, conflict increased. One declared something to be impure and gave a reason for his conclusion and another determined that same thing to be pure and gave a reason for his decision; one prohibited and the other permitted.<sup>2</sup>

Maimonides thus associates pluralism of commitment and conduct in Jewish life with a historical disaster, namely, the dislocation of the Great Sanhedrin from its seat of power and authority as a direct result of the destruction of the Temple. Nachmanides does the same. In a commentary on the biblical verse which exhorts Jews to accept, without reservation, decisions of the Great Sanhedrin, he writes:

The Torah was given to us in writing, and it is known that all will not agree with respect to issues that arise, conflict will increase, and the Torah will become many Torahs; so Scripture prescribed it as law that we shall obey the Great Sanhedrin that is located in the presence of God in the place that He will choose in all matters that they will tell us with respect to the interpretation of the Torah.<sup>3</sup>

1. *On Liberty* (Chicago: Gateway, 1955), p. 24.

2. *Mishna Torah*, "Mamrim," I, 4.

3. Commentary on *Deuteronomy*, XVIII, 11.

Because of the destruction of the Temple and the removal of the great judicial body from its sacred precincts, Jewish life has become pluralistic and incorporates many incompatible creeds. This is perceived as a consequence of historical conditions rather than the deliberate institution of an arrangement required by a Jewish ideal.

Another and, from a contemporary standpoint, a more striking account of the emergence of pluralism in Jewish life is offered by one of the great commentators on the Talmud, Meiri. He makes a distinction between prophecy and the spirit of prophecy.

When the last prophets died, i.e., Haggai, Zehariah, Malachi . . . prophecy disappeared from among Jews . . . Nevertheless, there were among them great sages on whom the spirit of prophecy rested on occasion . . . Notwithstanding, there did not exist full prophecy to discipline and to foretell the future on the instructions of the One Who informs the prophet. Because of this circumstance, envy and unjustifiable hatred spread among them in that they did not listen to one another. This led to the destruction of the Temple.<sup>4</sup>

It was the absence among Jews of a universally recognized central authority that led to the unfortunate pluralistic state of affairs. Meiri sees in such circumstances the seeds of envy and hostility. His description bears a striking and disturbing resemblance to conditions that obtain in our day.

Nevertheless, whether pluralism in Jewish life is to be traced to the absence of a Great Sanhedrin, as Maimonides and Nachmanides suggest, or to the lack of a universally recognized authority, as Meiri argues, it is clearly, according to all the above accounts, the result of historical circumstances rather than the outcome of the conscious and deliberate pursuit of an ideal. This state of affairs renders pluralism in Jewish life radically different from its counterpart in the American experience. For the latter, it is a goal; for the former it is a manifestation of *galut*, exile.<sup>5</sup> Those who have integrated American political conceptions into their religious scheme of things, i.e., they regard individualism, for example, in its American interpretation, as a Jewish *theological* axiom, have introduced into Judaism a force which, while advantageous to democracy, is, in the perspective of at least those sages cited above, deleterious to Jewish life. Behavioral pluralism, as distinguished from the theoretical variety, may well be an arrangement with which Jews have to, and can, live; it ought not, however, be elevated into a Jewish imperative.

### III

It is clear that pluralism is an ineradicable and inevitable feature of American Jewish life. The dream that visualizes its disappearance and the restoration of a harmonious uniformity is messianic in character. The

4. Commentary on *Bavli, Sanhedrin*, 11a.

5. The disappearance of both the Sanhedrin and the institution of prophecy are associated with *galut*.

challenge to the Jewish community, therefore, is not to eradicate pluralism but to promote an arrangement of Jewish affairs that will preserve unity in the face of an inexorable diversity.

The central and crucial question is: under what conditions is such unity possible? The first requirement is that there shall be a need for it — as there obviously is. It is not necessary to dwell on the fact that Jews everywhere are tied to each other by what Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik calls a covenant of fate. All in the Jewish community are in the same boat, a ready and inviting target for slander, hatred and persecution. Jews are a small people and unity appears to be a *sine qua non* of survival. Need, however will not, by itself, guarantee the preservation of unity. There are two other considerations that must be factored into the equation.

One is the element of Jewish identity — currently a subject of heated controversy. It has been the American experience that Jews of different theological persuasions are able to live together and even to unite in behalf of a common agenda. They disagree with respect to *kashrut* and the Sabbath, but they are at one in the battle against bigotry and in behalf of Jewish rights. They remove from their agenda issues that could envelop them in conflict and devote their energies to the task of struggling for common goals. This arrangement is feasible, however, only so long as each recognizes the Jewish identity of the other. Since classical Judaism separates the question of identity from commitment, pluralism can exist in Jewish life in the context of a unity derived from the perception that, notwithstanding a diversity of commitments, all in the pluralistic community are Jews.

When novel criteria for Jewish identity are introduced, division in the community turns out to be twofold: (a) Jews are separated from each other by virtue of diverging commitments; and (b) members of the traditional segment of the Jewish community do not recognize the Jewish identity of those who are admitted into the Jewish community by novel procedures. It is possible to preserve a unity of diversity if a *basis* for unity exists. In the past, such a basis was provided by the perception that all in the community were Jews. With the introduction of new standards, that basis is dissipated and cleavage becomes increasingly likely.

There is a third condition which, over the years, has not been adequately discussed but which merits attention. There are many in the Jewish community who are more concerned with *destiny* than with *fate*. The destiny of the Jew has to do with the goals and ideals which he is intended to achieve in the course of his history. The religious community perceives these goals as divinely ordained. The fate of the Jew is a function of the relation of the Jewish community to other peoples in the world. In the history of that relationship, the Jew was frequently the object of hostility and persecution. Those who are more concerned with fate than with destiny have less difficulty in accepting a unity of diversity no matter the extent to which ideological commitments among the various groups are

contradictory. Those whose essential focus is determined by destiny rather than fate tend more readily to ignore threats to the well being of the body of the Jewish people in the interest of pursuing with great vigor what they perceive as the goal of Jewish life. They will often resist the invitation to unite with an ideological group which they regard as an impediment to the realization of its destiny by the Jewish community. It is for this reason that some religious segments within the Jewish community have consistently repudiated the proposal that they unite with groups whose religious doctrines are repugnant to them.<sup>6</sup>

A few observations on the last point may be instructive. First, whether the imperatives of destiny are regarded as more demanding than those of fate will depend in large measure on the condition of Jewish life at any point in history. In a period of crisis when large portions of the Jewish population are vulnerable, there is a greater likelihood that considerations of fate will outweigh those of destiny and, for the moment, a unity of all segments of the community will be achieved. Such a situation prevailed, for example, during the Yom Kippur War. In time of peace, ideological differences tend to become more pronounced.

Second, there are varying perceptions as to the actual condition of Jewish life. The very same set of circumstances are regarded by some as threatening and by others as peaceful. Charles Silberman who, in his recent book, *A Certain People*, describes American Jewish existence as prosperous, secure and thriving, is taken to task by those who perceive dangers lurking around many corners. The latter obviously will argue the need for unity with greater enthusiasm than those who associate themselves with Silberman's views.

#### IV

Pluralism, whether perceived as a political norm or a historical necessity, is an ineradicable feature of American Jewish life. The problem, however, is not so much with the occurrence of diversity, as with the fact that, given certain perceptions concerning the relationship of the fate and destiny of the Jew and given pluralistic patterns which include diverse criteria of Jewish identity, unity may well become unattainable. The urgent and indispensable task is to convince all segments of the Jewish community to adopt perceptions and to preserve pluralistic arrangements in which unity can be achieved. This is our unfinished business.

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6. The conclusion drawn in this paragraph assumes that the concept of freedom in its American connotation, which grants to each the right to think and act as he pleases so long as his actions do not do injury to others, is not incorporated in the concept of Jewish destiny. Some do not grant this assumption.

# *Judaism and Feminism: The Unfinished Agenda*

ANNE LAPIDUS LERNER

IN VIRTUALLY ALL AREAS OF HUMAN LIFE, the twentieth century has witnessed the enormous impact of feminism. Women have entered the work-force in large numbers and some are now attaining leadership positions in areas of public and professional life. But the changes extend far beyond the relatively small number who have reached the proverbial top, wherever that may be. The women's movement has affected the ways in which we all think about ourselves and our lives. The women who are on welfare because they feel liberated enough to opt out of bad marriages are affected at least as significantly as are the women and girls who are striving for the Presidency. The men who work under the professional supervision of women — cooking, doing laundry, and being responsible for child-nurture — have also been profoundly changed. This has been a period in which society has entered an uncharted territory with few reliable guides for the new, evolving patterns of living.

The burgeoning of feminism has had many ramifications for Judaism and has led to a re-examination of it from another valuable perspective. Already, the process has gone beyond the theoretical to effect changes grounded in new perceptions and social realities. As we try to assess what remains to be done we must first acknowledge what has already taken place. The changes have been far-reaching and have extended into areas of personal and communal life.

In many ways, it has been the religious sphere which has been most profoundly affected. This is true for each of the movements. The Orthodox find themselves under increasing pressure to allow women to perform whatever rituals are permitted according to their view of Jewish law. The Conservatives are just beginning to deal with the entrance of women into the rabbinate. Within Reform circles, women have won greater acceptance, but still fall short of full equality. Reconstructionists, long in the vanguard of egalitarianism, face ever more radical issues. Clearly, in no group has the tension between Judaism and feminism been completely resolved.

Least subject to change are the Orthodox. While many among them

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would argue that Judaism does not react to social change, the range of what might be perceived as reaction is rather wide within the Orthodox community. There is the Lubavitch emphasis on the *mizvah* of candle-lighting, the strengthening of the Talmud program at Stern College, the multiplication of Orthodox women's prayer groups and the resistance to the approach to divorce which makes women subject to the will of their husbands. Even the increasingly militant *Haredi* community in Israel, as it keeps lengthening the margin of acceptability of women's sleeves in Meah She'arim, and burning pictures of bikini-clad women in bus shelters in Jerusalem, might be said to be reacting, however inflexibly, to what may be perceived as a threat from women. Faced with a situation in which their interpretation of Jewish law does not allow for a great deal of latitude, the Orthodox have limited options for change. The future agenda may well involve increased awareness, particularly in the more liberal parts of the movement, of the dissonance between giving women equal Jewish education and closing the rabbinate, the major educating institution, to them. Those within Orthodoxy who would bar women from advanced Jewish education do have an internally consistent position, although they will be under pressure to modify it.

While the sanctioning of women's prayer groups would seem to be an effective safety valve to draw off some of the pressure for even greater reform, it has met with rabbinic opposition and little public rabbinic support. Most critically, as the rate of divorce continues to climb, the numbers of women who have been hurt by the inequities of an halakhic system which does not allow them to initiate divorce will present a constant challenge to the absolute authority of rabbinic law as implemented within the Orthodox community. Each attempt at liberalization is fought back by an increasingly intransigent right wing. The Orthodox claim of absolute rabbinic authority often simplifies issues by presenting unequivocal solutions to complex issues, but when dealing with issues relating to women, who could easily be classed as a majority subject to inequitable treatment, this absolute authority may prove to be a stumbling-block.

All non-Orthodox movements within Judaism now include women in the rabbinate. The most recent addition here is the Conservative group, where the first women rabbis entered the Rabbinical Assembly in 1985. The resolution of the question of women rabbis took more than a decade of soul-searching and debate and there is enough of an unfinished agenda to continue to exercise the movement for more than another score of years. As more women enter the ranks of the rabbinate, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the movement as a whole, will be pressed to resolve issues of placement. There have already been such problems regarding female rabbinical students in High Holiday pulpits. The crush will be still greater when large numbers of women are ordained. It will take a conscious effort to ensure that women are considered suitable not only for the "soft" jobs — chaplaincy, education, Hillel, rabbinic assistant-



ships — but also for the “real” ones — substantial pulpits in good locations. A significant step is the recent establishment of a Task Force on the Position of Women in the Rabbinical Assembly, chaired by Gordon Tucker, Dean of the Rabbinical School. The presence of women in the rabbinate, though not the only requisite for equalizing the position of women within Conservative Judaism, is an important step.

Those who think that Conservative Judaism has resolved the “women’s issue” by admitting women to the Rabbinical School are unaware of the real dimensions of the issue. The collection of faculty papers on the ordination of women, for example, reflects divergent points of view among both supporters and opponents of women’s ordination. Even among its supporters, there is little unanimity. A critical issue is women’s right to serve as witnesses for documents of a religious nature. Until consensus is reached each woman, lay or clergy, will have to take the course that she considers correct, knowing that some Conservative rabbis may invalidate the documents which she witnesses. While female rabbis are now accepted members of the Rabbinical Assembly, women cantors are neither given the diploma of *hazzan* nor are they admitted to the Cantors Assembly. This situation must be dealt with in the immediate future because, despite the differences in halakhic categories between rabbis and cantors, both public perception and the number of women currently functioning as cantors in Conservative congregations make the present situation untenable. Some of these women functioning as cantors are, in fact, graduates of the Seminary’s College of Sacred Music. In response to the admission of women to the Rabbinical School at Jewish Theological Seminary, a group of rabbis and laypersons founded the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism. Although it started in response to this issue, its position now includes both an emphasis on the importance of gender-distinct roles and a concern for limiting the divergence of Conservative Judaism from Orthodoxy in other areas as well. While this is a small group, it does point to the problems attendant upon changing the role of women in public ritual and to the tension in a pluralistic religious movement, some factions of which are no longer willing to pray together.

Sally Priesand made history by becoming the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi and her ordination in 1975 at Hebrew Union College marks the introduction of women into pulpits. Despite its experience in this area, however, the Reform movement can point to little success in placing women in large, independent ones. In the early years this was explained as a function of the age, background, and differing career objectives of the women rabbis. At present there is some feeling that, these factors aside, large Reform synagogues are still reluctant to hire women as their senior or sole rabbi. The situation is slowly improving, but there is still considerable work to be done in the area of public education. The commitment of the Reform movement to addressing the issues is attested by the existence of the Union of American Hebrew Congrega-

tions' Task Force on the Equality of Women in Judaism, headed by Annette Daum.

The Reconstructionist movement deserves credit for being the first to champion egalitarianism as an underlying principle. From its inception, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has admitted women to its ordination program. While women rabbis have a relatively high rate of acceptance in the synagogues and *havurot* of the movement, another significant issue does remain. The question of homosexuality and lesbianism among rabbinical students and rabbis has been openly acknowledged by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. While all data on sexual orientation would lead us to believe that the problem may exist at other rabbinical schools, even as it does in all other areas of society, it is the Reconstructionists who have openly espoused non-heterosexuality. One is struck by the degree to which lesbianism, in particular, has become an accepted fact of life in its circle.

Liturgy provides a challenge more complicated in some ways than does spiritual leadership. It is hard to tamper with the resonance of the language of a liturgy much of which has roots in the rabbinic period. The Hebrew language itself has no way of being gender-neutral. The God Who is a Ruler must, in Hebrew, be either a King or a Queen. There have been, nonetheless, a number of attempts to make the Hebrew text more accessible to women, among them the use of feminine God-language and being certain that women are included when referring to those praying. The availability of gender-neutral language facilitates solutions when dealing with an English text or translation. In response to the issues raised by feminism, the new Conservative *Siddur Sim Shalom* has made only scattered, minor revisions in its text and translations, but it does include an English alternative version of the Amidah for Shabbat and for Festivals, written by Rabbi Andre Ungar, which incorporates the names of the matriarchs as well as the patriarchs. The introduction to the *Siddur* does not deal with a feminist approach to the prayerbook but indicates only that changes have been made "to reflect that women as well as men are members of a congregation"<sup>1</sup> and that both men and women do, in many congregations, participate in the Torah service.

Although egalitarian perspectives seem to have had little impact upon the Hebrew text of the Reform *Gates of Prayer* (1975), the translations have been altered. In each of these prayerbooks, what is most striking is that the feminist challenge has gone virtually unmentioned in the introductory material. While one could argue that the Reform prayerbook was published ten years ago, before the feminist challenge was really understood, one could also point to its publication in the year in which the first woman rabbi was ordained in the movement. The Conservative

1. *Siddur Sim Shalom*, ed., Jules Harlow (New York: Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue), p. xxvi.

prayerbook, ten years in the editing, might have addressed these issues more forthrightly. The Reconstructionist prayerbooks, the most recent of which was published in 1963, have not, despite the egalitarian stance of the movement, changed the liturgy to accomodate a feminist approach. Not surprisingly, Orthodox *siddurim* have not dealt with these issues.

The issue runs much deeper than language. It involves the entire metaphoric structure of prayer. The metaphor of God as King is but one example. Another, in the human realm, would be the use of the male lover/female beloved metaphor in Alkebetz' sixteenth century Shabbat hymn, *Lekha Dodi*. There, it is the male who is urged to go forth to greet the Shabbat Queen. Are the metaphoric emotional overtones different from what they would be if it were the female going out to meet the male? Gender based metaphors are endemic. Their function and meaning remain to be explored.

Another area open for consideration is the role of women as sources of Torah and Jewish learning. The entry of women into the rabbinate will probably eventually result in a shift in the definition of the rabbinic role. Women will also become more prominent as interpreters of Torah. To this point, the midrashic perspective has been virtually an exclusive male preserve. The future should bring with it the addition of a female perspective which will, for the first time, enable us to see Judaism whole.

While growing numbers of women are pursuing careers in Jewish scholarship, few have obtained teaching positions at American universities. In September, 1986, Paula Hyman became the first woman to occupy a chair in Jewish Studies in an Ivy League university when she accepted an appointment to teach modern Jewish history at Yale. At the same time, Judith Hauptman became the only tenured woman on the faculty of any of the rabbinical seminaries in this country when she was promoted to Associate Professor of Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary. There are a number of fairly large Jewish studies departments with no women at all. Their inclusion in Jewish studies may be even slower than in other university departments, since the "old boys network" becomes more potent when accompanied by a mystique about men as the sources of Jewish learning. What will happen to the field and its practitioners as increasing numbers of women are trained is part of the unfinished agenda of feminism and Judaism. At this point one senses, for example, an increased interest in social, family and women's history among Jewish scholars, both male and female. Female professors of Jewish studies, like female rabbis, will continue to bring to the field a different perspective, another set of questions.

As challenging as these issues are, the ones connected with elementary Jewish education are more complex and, ultimately, more important. Teachers and the curricula they use have to become more responsive to the changing roles of women and men in life, as well as in religion. Families of two parents and two children in gender-defined social and

religious roles dominate Jewish textbooks. Even the few heroines of the past are often overlooked. *Ima on the Bema*, by Rabbi Mindy Avra Portnoy, with its description of life as the daughter of a female rabbi, or Floreva Cohen's *Sneakers to Schul*, with its subtle message that men can be responsible for household chores, indicate a sensitivity to the new reality of many Jewish families. Nonetheless, it will be some time before curricula and textbooks are adjusted to reflect current sociological and religious trends.

Women are slowly entering other areas of prominence as well. Shoshana Cardin heads the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. A number of women have headed local Jewish federations, both as laypersons and as professionals. Again, the influx of female students has been felt in all the Jewish communal service programs and in the Federation Executive Recruitment and Education Program sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations. As is true in other not-for-profit and profit fields, the test is not in entry-level or middle-management positions, but, rather, in the advancement of women into the upper-level. The extent to which men occupy the highest paying and most prestigious slots, while women hold the lowest paying jobs is revealed in the 1981 survey on "Status of Women in Professional Positions in Selected Jewish Communal Agencies in Greater New York," conducted under the auspices of the Task Force on the Role of Jewish Women in a Changing Society of the Commission on Synagogue Relations of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. Among its findings are that, in executive director positions, males outnumber females by a ratio of ten to one; in professional line staff positions, female outnumber males by a ratio of two to one. In Jewish federations around the country only about five per cent of the executive directors are women, and none of them in the larger cities. While these statistics are disappointing, they do represent positive change over the past decade.

It is to be expected that as women move into positions of power and prominence in Jewish organizations they will make these institutions more responsive to what are often termed "women's issues." Poverty is, to a large extent, one of them. Single-parent families, overwhelmingly parented by women, are disproportionately represented among the impoverished. The disparity between male and female incomes, the ineffectiveness of the courts in enforcing child support, the proportion of women without career skills all contribute to the rate of female poverty. The need for subsidized Jewish day-care has only recently become recognized in the Jewish community.

The needs of the old parallel those of the young. Again, the issues to be faced as the population "grays" are often issues of particular relevance to women. They live longer than men do, are less likely to have pensions and are more likely to have been their spouses' primary caretakers. Whatever money a couple has set aside for its old age is often spent on the care of the one who needs it first, usually the male. The poor population of

elderly women will continue to grow in the years ahead. While these issues are neither specifically Jewish nor specifically feminist, they are, to some extent, both. Jewish tradition has always had a great deal to say about care for the poor and the aged. Clearly, these populations are an appropriate feminist concern as well.

Poor women are not the only ones with problems. Money does not solve the problems of the singles, the single parent or the aged women. It does not resolve the tensions of the two-career family. The community needs to take these groups into account in its programs. The unfinished agenda will include meeting the needs of all Jewish populations.

There is no question but that the last fifteen years have brought with them an enormous change in the position of women in Judaism. Judaism itself has been examined in a new light. If, indeed, Judaism and the Jewish community are to offer equal responsibilities, rights, concern and opportunities to women and men, it is important to realize that the task is far from finished and the unfinished agenda should take us well into the twenty-first century. As Rabbi Tarfon said, "While it is not incumbent upon you to complete the task, neither are you free to desist from it."



## *The Star*

DAVID SPARENBERG

At the end of the immense journey  
I know  
only that there is God  
the mightiest lover  
wrapped  
in a golden glow  
in the still of night.

O bird of the sky!  
what is this idolatry  
of doing  
the accumulation  
of the inanimate  
praise  
of ephemeral might?

At the end of the long road  
I find  
His love for humanity  
awaiting our human love.

At the end of the long day  
prayers in humility  
words to console I find  
At the end of the long night . . .  
the star that shone still shines.

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### III.

## ***The Four Movements in American Judaism***

### ***Orthodoxy: Flourishing But Divided***

LOUIS BERNSTEIN

ORTHODOXY'S MAJOR PROBLEM AS IT gropes towards the twentieth century is itself. The prophets who, as late as the 1930s foresaw its doom, have been discredited by history. Orthodoxy is flourishing in the United States and brims with a self-confidence bordering on triumphalism. It can be justifiably proud of its educational network and of a generation of young people who are uncompromisingly committed to Torah and are thoroughly at home in the American milieu. Its demographic growth is the only positive population factor on the American Jewish scene. New Orthodox communities are continuing to bud in cities where there was no Orthodox life two decades ago. But — Orthodoxy is troubled, and the inner opposing forces must come to terms with themselves if the recent surge can extend even further into the American Jewish future.

The very rubric of Orthodoxy is deficient. The single definition cannot contain the many components ascribed to Orthodoxy but which are basically opposed to each other. Religious Zionists have much more in common with secular Zionists than with those elements in Orthodoxy that violently oppose the Jewish state. Many a worshipper in a Young Israel synagogue will be more comfortable with an adherent of the traditional wing of the Conservative movement than with a Belzer hassid. Several years ago, I took a class of Yeshiva University students to the village of New Square. The very first building that we visited was the kindergarten and we saw a group of four-year-olds being escorted by the *rebbe* to the

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washroom. The two groups were struck dumb by the culture shock. The Yeshiva University students, in their jeans, sneakers and *kipot srugot* gazed at the tots in their long underwear, curly earlocks and European caps. The college students could only utter *Fiddler on the Roof*. The children simultaneously declared, *shkazim*.

The Hebrew language, in Israel, has recognized the dichotomy. The word *haredi* denotes the so-called ultra right, while the word *dati* describes the religious Zionist. The line between them in Israel is expressed in political affiliation, differences in the role of women, the attitude to military service, and to the state and its institutions. The schools are totally different. In more than one sense, they are worlds apart. In the United States, Yeshiva University is miles apart from Lakewood in terms of outlook, yet both are classified as *yeshivot*.

The Orthodox right wing, often lumped together by the press which cannot penetrate its fine differences, is not a monolithic body. The overt hostility between the *yeshiva world*, led by Rabbi Shach in Bnei Brak, flares into verbal conflagrations with the hassidic elements led by the Gerer *rebbe* in Jerusalem and the verbal flames jump the ocean to Boro Park and Williamsburgh. On occasion (far too frequent), verbal differences are translated to violence which embarrasses all Orthodox Jews, all Jews. The last visit of the Belzer *rebbe* to New York saw Boro Park converted into an armed camp. Helmeted police and a hovering helicopter protected the *rebbe's* quarters from Satmar hassidim. For years, Lee Avenue in Williamsburgh was a virtual battleground that required the intervention of the police in force as, on the seventh day of Passover, hassidim sought to preach in synagogues in the terrain which Satmar considered exclusively its own.

"Modern Orthodoxy" and "Centrist Orthodoxy" are but two of the names attached to the brand of Orthodoxy linked with Yeshiva University, the Rabbinical Council of America, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the National Council of Young Israel, Mizrahi and other assorted spinoffs. All are similar in purpose, frequently overlap in activity, and often have the very same people involved. But, it is easier to persuade Assad to meet Peres than to get the leadership of the Orthodox synagogue bodies to agree on anything of major substance. Recently, the presidents of both of these bodies were involved in a bitter battle for the leadership of a national roof organization. The leadership of the national synagogue bodies worship, and are active members, in synagogues affiliated with the competing movements. There are two very active and successful religious Zionist women's groups. With the possible exception of a handful who are in leadership in both groups, none of their members can explain the differences at all and, to the eye of the objective observer, there aren't any.

When one steps out of this thicket of multiplicity and views the accomplishments, despite the duplications and the cruel waste of inesti-



mable sums of money multiplied by the endless hours contributed by dedicated volunteers, the accomplishments defy reason. But, on the other hand, it is evident that if this modern Orthodoxy could put its act together in the remaining years of the twentieth century, American Jewry's image in the twenty-first century would be entirely different than what it is today.

The involved Orthodox Jew concentrates his activity locally. With the probable single exception of the Rabbinical Council of America, the ties to national organizations are weak and, at best, nebulous. The synagogue, day school, and *mikveh* have priorities. The second tier of interest may include Yeshiva University or a specific institution in Israel and America. Activity in the UJA or local federation is still quite limited in terms of contribution and leadership. The issues that are of concern remain the day school, the synagogue, kashrut and, possibly, still, the *shlishi* — *shishi* apples of discord. Even the national agendas are overloaded with these concerns. But, as the twenty-first century looms larger, the newer breed of Orthodox Jew is participating more frequently in the broader community and rabbis are showing the way. Needs of the community, such as the day school or kashrut in the local Jewish institutions, and Israel's security mandate this interest and provide the common ground for Orthodox Jews and the rest of the community.

As ever-mobile Jews continue to leave the metropolitan areas for the suburbs and go beyond, to the sunbelt zone and to new communities in university cities or scientific and industrial sites, the Orthodox leadership (both rabbinic and lay) that is emerging is developing a perspective which is quite different from that of the insulated New York organization. More than any other component of the American Jewish community, Orthodoxy is New York-oriented. The major institutions and organizations are based in Manhattan and most of the congregational strength is along the east coast. The last time that a president of the Rabbinical Council of America was elected from outside of the New York area was more than thirty-five years ago. The Orthodox Union had one from Boston thirty years ago. Other national bodies have similar histories. As transportation and communications become easier, faster and cheaper, this situation, too, must change, and for the better. Orthodoxy then will be able to emerge from the disproportionate shadow that is still cast upon it by its right wing. Current concerns are viewed differently by the Orthodox Jew in a small community hundreds of miles from New York than by a resident of Flatbush or Far Rockaway. An active Orthodox rabbi in New York may complete a lengthy career without ever exchanging a word with a non-Orthodox colleague, but there are communities in the United States where common Jewish interests mandate not only almost daily contact among rabbis but intimate cooperation. The twenty-first century, with its inevitable changes, will bring that kind of relationship on a wider plane.

The issue that Orthodoxy must eventually resolve is the ideological

one. The two synagogue groups, the Orthodox Union and Young Israel, adhere tenaciously to the policy of opposing membership in the Synagogue Council. Young Israel never belonged. The current leadership of the Orthodox Union is pressing for the severance of ties with the Synagogue Council and seeks to limit its activity. It is restrained only by the unequivocal posture of the Rabbinical Council of America, which has repelled intensive pressures since the ban on the Synagogue Council and New York Board of Rabbis was imposed by eleven *roshei yeshiva* some thirty years ago. The Yeshiva University leadership forcefully opposes withdrawal from the Synagogue Council. The very same forces from the right that blindly pressure for withdrawal from the Synagogue Council are opposed to the existence of Yeshiva University, their contention being that secular studies are antithetical to Torah scholarship and Orthodox conviction. Yeshiva University certainly disproves that.

But, as the leadership of the synagogue bodies continue to look over their right shoulder, their position becomes increasingly anomalous and vexing. Rabbis belong to an organization in which membership in the Synagogue Council has become a major principle. Leaders of the Rabbinical Council are active in the Synagogue Council and occupy its highest offices. A poll conducted by an eminent sociologist at a time when anti-Reform sentiments were highest — when the Central Conference of American Rabbis voted to alter the tradition of matrilineal Judaism — indicated that synagogue leaders, in a four to one ratio, were opposed to severing ties with the Synagogue Council, twice the prevalent sentiment among rabbis. It was the American Orthodox synagogue bodies that consecrated religious pluralism in the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency by joining those bodies on the very same footing as the Reform and Conservative movements.

And Israel. Much of right wing Orthodoxy has never recognized its existence, while some of it is actively opposed to its existence. Those in the modern camp must come to grips with the fact that there are no compromises. One of the outstanding Orthodox congregations in the country recently learned, to its chagrin, that the talented young cantor whom it had hired would not sing the *Hatikvah* or recite the blessing for the *Hallel* on *Yom HaAzmaut*. Teachers in Orthodox Zionist day schools refuse to participate in Israel's Independence Day services. American Orthodox groups are trapped by single issue groups into wasting money and energy on losing causes in Israel, be they "Who Is A Jew?", Mormons, autopsies, etc., and each of these is seized upon by a different sect as the rallying cry to the ramparts. The experiences of the eighties, particularly exacerbated as this article is being written, already are compelling even the most hesitant American Orthodox leaders of all persuasions to take a new look. American Orthodoxy stands firmly with Israel and resents those who place anti-state ads in the public press on Israel's independence anniversary or who brand it a dictatorship worse than the Soviet Union. The

patience of American Orthodoxy with such a brand of Orthodoxy is at the terminal point.

The crown jewel in American Orthodoxy's achievements is the educational network, but success creates new challenges. Each educational establishment is an island in, and to, itself. Such a situation renders solutions to universal problems impossible. Bluntly stated, there is a critical shortage of teachers and no new ones on the horizon. There is not a single teachers' institute. Meeting this challenge is vital to the future quality of Jewish life universally, for, as American Jewry will go, so will other Jewish centers in the twenty-first century. The Torah Education Network, sponsored by the Torah Culture Department of the Jewish Agency and Yeshiva University that began functioning in September, 1986, has the potential for defining the challenge and initiating the preliminary steps to meet it.

Whereas the challenges and problems that have been previously enumerated are from within Orthodoxy, there will continue to be challenges from the outside, from secular Judaism and Reform Judaism. The latter has assumed a strident and discordant posture with its patrilineal Jewish stance. The vast increase of divorce among American Jews and the remarriage of divorced couples without religious divorces have raised impossible barriers for Jewish unity. In increasing numbers, Orthodox Jews and, presumably, committed Conservative Jews, must utilize the most extreme caution in entering into family relationships with Reform Jews. When the Central Conference of American Rabbis recently suggested a female rabbi for the military chaplaincy, the Reform rabbinate knew that it would terminate a relationship predating World War II. Not even the most tolerant Orthodox rabbi could be expected to lend endorsement to a female as a rabbi and the door has now been opened to military endorsement of rabbis who, in addition, are not considered Jewish by the Orthodox or Conservative rabbinic groups.

Such challenges will also make Orthodoxy more cohesive. Whereas the possibility is real that they can polarize and force American Orthodoxy into a more rightist stance, they also provide it with unparalleled opportunity to reach out with the message of Torah to American Jews, that vast majority who are unsynagogued, uneducated, unaffiliated, indifferent and disappearing. They represent the greatest challenge to American Orthodoxy as the twenty-first century approaches. Orthodoxy has the potential to reach out to all Jews and, I pray, will have the will and wisdom to do so.

# *Conservative Judaism Confronts Its Future*

MORDECAI WAXMAN

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN THE UNITED States succeeded in the past because it had a philosophy appropriate to its time and place. It may fail in the future if it does not create the mechanisms necessary to communicate that philosophy meaningfully to another generation.

The problems which beset Conservative Judaism as it enters its second century are fivefold.

First of all, it has been slow to respond to the new developments in Jewish life in the last twenty years. Among them is the fact that the Orthodox and Reform Movements were moving in on the ground which had been occupied both ideologically and practically by Conservative Judaism. Orthodoxy finally came to grips with the American scene, began to produce rabbis and institutions which could function in that scene, and, even more important, to produce an American-trained Orthodox laity which was able to assume significant roles in Jewish social, organizational and parochial life. Reform, whose constituency already embraced the non-observant, the intermarried, and the poorly educated Hebraically, began to stake out claims in the Jewish world which was built about concern with Israel. Its members now became factors in UJA, as they had been in Federation. They moved into Israel with buildings and money. In America, they reinstituted all of the institutions that they had previously rejected — Hebrew school, Bar Mitzvah, Hebrew prayer. Moreover, on the principle of Henry IV that “Paris is worth a mass,” practices ranging from head coverings to Kosher catering were introduced in many congregations. In short, they could readily be all things to all men, untroubled by the charge of inconsistency.

While Orthodoxy donned some Conservative clothes but wrapped itself in the mantle of authenticity and Reform offered much of Conservative congregational practice as part of a religious smorgasbord, Conservative Judaism was blind to these developments. The only new element in its approach in the last two decades has been to redefine the role of women in Judaism. Vital as the subject is, concern with it inhibited action on other matters and did not give Conservative Judaism either a new direction or a new dynamism.

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What led Conservative Judaism to this state of stasis was a historical miscalculation. Immediately after the Second World War, Conservative Judaism grew by leaps and bounds, without much effort or forethought. American Jews were on the move, service in the war had established their American identity and they sought an "American Judaism." Conservative Judaism was the most obvious answer to their needs and desires. It was an "American Judaism" which harmonized nostalgia and modernity. The Masaryck survey, some twenty years later, seemed to confirm a self evident truth. Over 50% of the organized Jewry of America identified themselves as Conservative Jews. The result was that Conservative Judaism mistook a historical hiccup for a historical inevitability. Oblivious to underlying changes, it rested upon its earlier laurels and lost the dynamism and creativity which had characterized it.

2. Conservative Judaism has not yet converted itself into a movement. It has developed a series of institutions and organizations over the course of the years, but it has failed to achieve the centralization of idea and effect which characterize a movement.

The failure is in part due to a hope which was not realized. For many years, Conservative Judaism leaders preferred to characterize their form of Judaism as a tendency rather than a movement. Schechter himself was rather tentative in characterizing the philosophy which he expounded as the authentic form of Judaism, although he saw it as made necessary by the time and place and as a rallying point for those who were opposed to the Reform Movement. His successors in leadership hoped that Conservative Judaism would absorb Orthodoxy and so they held the door open to Orthodox Jews. Conservative Judaism did, indeed, for many years, draw many of its members and most of its Rabbis from those who left the Orthodox ranks. However, that process came to a halt some fifteen or twenty years ago. It is now clear that both Orthodoxy and Reform treat themselves as movements with clear cut goals. However reluctantly, Conservative Judaism must face the fact that it cannot succeed as a tendency and that it must face the facts and implications of being a movement. This necessarily means an internal reorganization of the arms of Conservative Judaism, which has been built about the notion of the primacy of the Seminary and the obligation of the various arms of the body to build up the center. It is a formula which worked successfully while Conservative Judaism was expanding naturally and while the Seminary was, itself, being creative and expansive. Today, the great need is to sustain and build up the periphery. The challenge is in the field, not on the campus, and Conservative Judaism is not properly organized to meet it.

3. A third problem which Conservative Judaism must face is that it is not training Conservative Jews. It is a commonplace to say that the only true Conservative Jews — that is, those who abide by the practice as well as the ideology of Conservative Judaism — are the professionals of the Movement and their families. That should not, and need not, be so.

The initial failure probably is in the schools. By and large, our schools do not teach the Conservative ideology nor do they set forth Conservative patterns of Jewish behavior. Many of the teachers are not Conservative Jews and, therefore, are neither missionaries in the Conservative cause, nor capable of teaching or fulfilling the primary role of a teacher, teaching by personal example. On a more fundamental level, the Conservative schools and curriculum have failed to communicate a sense of the “cho-senness” of Judaism and of the Jewish people. It becomes particularly important to do so in the “open world” which Jews now encounter.

Obviously, the Solomon Schechter schools do better than the supplementary schools in conveying information and skills, but it is by no means plain that they are teaching Conservative Judaism any more effectively than are the supplementary schools. The complaint has been heard that, when the Conservative Movement is more successful, as in its Schechter and Ramah programs, it has produced young people who are dissatisfied with Conservative institutions and look for fulfillment elsewhere, whether in Orthodoxy or in a Havurah movement, instead of lending their energy to the redirection of the Conservative Movement.

The problem is compounded on the other side by the nature of Conservative Services. They demand a degree of literacy and fluency in reading Hebrew which is lost, if indeed it ever existed, for many of our school products who abandoned Hebrew school and service attendance at the age of thirteen. As adults, devoid of ideology, unskilled in participation, they are often lost to Conservative Synagogues and, if they marry someone who cannot read Hebrew, they are ready candidates for Reform Congregations. In spiritual as in monetary matters, Gresham’s law operates and the less demanding prevail over the more demanding.

Obviously, it is necessary to begin teaching the Conservative viewpoint as a positive ideology and to present it as an authentic and demanding version of Judaism, rather than as the compromise which so many members of Conservative congregations take it to be. The place where that must start, however, is not the school, but on the adult level. Missionary zeal directed to adults will change the atmosphere and the community in which the schools operate and thus shape the future.

4. The fourth challenge to which Conservative Judaism must react, if it is to move forward in its second century, is to recognize the revolutions that we have experienced in Jewish life and respond to them.

No one has yet coped adequately in theological or liturgical terms with the meaning of the Holocaust and with what meaning we want to communicate to future generations. True, the new Conservative prayer-books make an attempt; the Tisha B’Av and Shoah Day Services seek to create a mood and preserve a recollection, but they are all, at best, mildly effective and affective. To suggest a problem is not to suggest a solution — but, obviously, there has to be a wrestling with a major event in Jewish and human history and we cannot pretend that all is as it was before.



The meaning of Israel is another area about which no new insights have been forthcoming despite the fact that its existence represents an overturning of 1900 years of Jewish history. Is it to be treated as a step in sacred history or is it merely a political and sociological phenomenon? Does it call upon us to urge and teach and implement *aliyah*? Does it demand a rethinking of the Judaisms which have sprung up in response to diaspora situations? These and other questions which will be raised below are barely on the agenda of Conservative Judaism, or of the other branches of Judaism.

Certainly one of the most insistent and demanding questions is that posed by intermarriage and by the many conversions to Judaism in America. These raise internal as well as external questions.

So far as the external question is concerned, it is by now clear that the Rabbinic establishment in Israel and much of the Orthodox rabbinate in the Diaspora, are engaged in a political operation designed to deny the conversions of the Conservative and Reform Movements. The Orthodox position of insisting on halakhic conversion clearly excludes much of the Reform conversion, which makes no real attempt at halakhic process. But it has become clear that it is designed to exclude Conservative conversion even though it does conform to halakhic process, on the obscure grounds that Conservative rabbis mean something different by Halakhah than do Orthodox rabbis. In short, not Halakhah but politics and legitimacy and delegitimization are at issue. Meanwhile, intermarriage continues apace and conversion has to be dealt with.

A broader question which is hinted at by the presence of an increasing number of converts in the Jewish community is, who is the constituency of the Conservative Movement today and who will it be in the future?

The post-World War II membership of Conservative Judaism consisted essentially of the children of immigrants or grandchildren for whom the grandparental pattern was still a living influence. Many of them came out of homes which they tended to call Orthodox, but which were essentially "folk-Jewish" in an American version of a European style. Many others came from families involved with the Yiddishist movements, the Arbeiter Ring, the Jewish labor unions, readers of the *Vorwärts*. In short, they came from "Amcho" the general folk group. They were not ideologues, but they had nostalgias. Conservative Judaism, with its sense for a Jewish life style, devoid of rigorous demands and rigidity, combining both a sense for the nostalgias of first and second generation descendants of East European Jews, including the non-religious, and for the American scene, fitted their needs.

But the nostalgias are wearing thin for a younger generation whose grandparents are American-born and they are non-existent for a totally new population of families in which one partner is a convert or a non-Jew. While all the statistics are no more than guesses, it seems that there must be, by now, or will be in the near future, some tens of thousands of such



converted or intermarried families. In the smaller communities of the country, their number and presence in congregations is often considerable and there the question of how they are dealt with cannot be avoided. The overall issue has not been thought through and even the most minimal organizational action, which would be to follow up those who have been converted by Conservative rabbis and to make sure that they are involved in the Jewish community, has not been undertaken. The only group which seems to be facing the problem is the Reform Movement whose solution seems to be largely unacceptable to Conservative Judaism, let alone to Orthodoxy. The inevitable result of the failure to deal with the converted seems to be to let Reform Judaism write their destiny.

The problem of constituency is further heightened by the mobility of the Jewish community. The failure of Conservative Judaism to do the simple organizational things — to keep in touch with those who have moved, to supply them with literature, to see that they are introduced to congregations in their new localities, in short, to remind them they are Conservative Jews — means that large numbers are lost to Conservative affiliation. This is particularly true of younger people who have barely developed loyalties to the synagogues in which they grew up and have none to the larger organization or even to the ideology.

Many of these problems may be met by organizational improvements and by the development of appropriate and widely distributed literature. Furthermore, the development of a missionary corps, including laymen with professional qualifications and seed money for new congregations and institutions are eminently desirable responses to the problems of a new and dispersed constituency.

Many of the operations spelled out above may be dealt with by organizational reform and movement redefinition. However, there are a whole series of problems which arise out of the revolution which we have experienced in Jewish life in the last four decades which must be faced by Conservative Judaism if it is to be a vital movement in the 21st century.

The twin revolutions which are represented by the creation of Israel and by the development of American Jewry as a unique Diaspora community have far-reaching implications. There has never been an equivalent situation in Jewish history, including the Babylonian experience, when there were simultaneously a Jewish state with as much strength as Israel enjoys and a Diaspora community as large, as prosperous, as creative and as fortunate in enjoying “freedom in the midst of freedom” as American Jewry. Both seem destined to endure for the discernable future and, therefore, the relations between them are a major cause for concern.

One almost inevitable development is that we will have two major forms of Judaism — one suitable for the land of Israel and the other for the Diaspora. In each case, subdivisions of the kind represented by Conservative, Orthodox and Reform will exist, but, fundamentally, there will be two Judaisms responding to the needs and lifestyles of two different

communities. This was the case in the first and second centuries when the Jews of Palestine were addressing themselves to the question of how to live as Jews in their natural setting and, so, developed the Mishnah, and the Jews of the Hellenistic Diaspora were dealing with the question of why be a Jew in an advanced culture or non-natural setting and so formulated philosophies such as that of Philo, or, in later times, that of Saadyah, Halevi, Maimonides and the like.

The imperatives of life in Israel and the Diaspora will dictate how, while drawing upon the common tradition, Judaism can respond to the different needs of these respective Jewries. Inevitably there will be differences. In the Diaspora, such questions as intermarriage, conversion, Sabbath and holiday observance, Kashrut, both inside and outside the home, must necessarily loom large; in Israel they are negligible. The establishing and furthering of Jewish identity is a Diaspora problem, not an Israeli one. In Israel, there are, in effect, new Jewish *mizvot* such as serving in the army, paying taxes, that is, doing what citizens of a state do, the effect of which is to preserve Jews and Judaism.

While these differences are already foreshadowed, they have not been faced. If Conservative Judaism is to be a vital movement in the 21st century, it must define and refine a Diaspora Judaism appropriate to the emerging needs. This means a rethinking of the relationship to Israel, redefinition of such a Conservative Shibboleth as *Klal Yisrael* (Catholic Israel) and of the Conservative approach to Halakhah.

Certainly, one of the results of the double revolution is that Halakhah, which has been so central to Jewish life and thought, must be reexamined. Despite the fact that the term Halakhah is employed with growing frequency, its application in Jewish life is increasingly constricted. It is more and more concerned with the ritual aspects of Judaism and, far less than in earlier centuries, with the moral, the business and the political life of the Jew. Its movement to the periphery of Jewish existence is made manifest by the fact that it is not central to political and judicial decision making in Israel. In the Diaspora, it is rarely invoked to offer guidance in the major issues of political and social life with which Jews have been called upon to deal ever since they achieved citizenship in the last century.

Talmudic law and the legal system which grew out of it were the products of periods of powerlessness. They were not called upon to deal with issues of sovereignty. Yet these are among the major issues with which Jews must be concerned today. Judaism and the whole Jewish view of history are today being tested. It has been our contention that if Jews were to enjoy sovereignty and enjoy an autonomous existence, they would be able to create a society reflecting their ideas and values. It is clear that we are not yet ready to do so.

One obvious need, today, is both to expand the role of Halakhah to embrace new areas of Jewish and human experience and to call upon other resources of the Jewish tradition to enrich the halakhic approach or

to supplement it. The rich aggadic, philosophical, ethical and theological traditions, both in their ancient and modern forms, have been too much ignored as authentic sources of Jewish decision making. Biblical instruction has also been allowed to recede into the background. Yet the Bible is the only body of material which deals with Israel during its first period of sovereignty. It needs to be reexamined anew.

Conservative Judaism has the intellectual flexibility and respect for tradition and the halakhic process, combined with a regard for general thought, to undertake this task. Its halakhic concerns, in the past, have been limited to ritualistic, liturgical and family matters. The times demand wider concerns. Conservative Judaism has developed an approach and a philosophy for dealing with halakhic issues and harmonizing them with the needs of the Jewish people. Its major contribution in the future may well be to redirect Halakhah, to redefine it for contemporary purposes in a systematic manner.

If Conservative Judaism, however, is to have a significant impact in the future, it must abandon the parochialism which has characterized it and has made it essentially an American phenomenon. In the days before World War II, the religious character of organized Western European Jewry and its institutions was essentially Conservative. In the post-war years, Conservative Judaism failed to restore its position in Europe and the communities there fell under the influence of Israel and its Orthodox establishment. A significant Conservative presence was established in South America by dint of the activity of a few people, but it has not been adequately supported by the American organization. In both these and other areas, Orthodoxy and Reform have sought to preempt the field. It may be late in the day for Conservative Judaism to enter or reenter these Jewish worlds, but it is, nonetheless, vitally necessary to do so.

The problem of establishing Conservative Judaism in Israel is more complicated. Its efforts there have been poorly funded and inadequately publicized. The bulk of the Conservative Synagogues, forty in number, are small and marginal. Several public schools teaching religious subjects from a Conservative point of view have been founded and a rabbinical school has recently been established. They may be effective in the future. The real problem of Conservative Judaism in Israel, however, is that it has no resonance in the population.

The great bulk of Israelis are either Eastern European or Sephardic-Oriental Jews or their descendants. They were never compelled to face the problem of harmonizing the Jewish religion with modernism and with citizenship, as Western and, later, American Jews were called upon to do. In consequence, Conservative, Reform and neo-Orthodox Judaism, which are the creations of Western Jewry, mean little to them.

Since Israelis do not face the Jewish identity problems of Diaspora Judaism, they have little need to choose between religious or Jewish secular philosophies. They live in a society where an Orthodox official rabbin-

ate is empowered to regulate certain aspects of their lives. On the whole, it does not radically affect their capacity to observe or not observe, to believe or not to believe. There is little need or desire to revolt against the prevalent and familiar pattern. Moreover, the prevailing dominance of the Orthodox rabbinical establishment is built into the political structure of Israel and is reinforced by the political involvement and power of Israeli religious parties which seem to be ever more fundamentalist.

Conservative and Reform Judaism have demanded acceptance in the name of democracy, contending that democratic societies recognize the rights of minorities. This does not accord with the political realities of Israel nor with the views of democracy held by most Israeli political leaders, whose overriding concern is to stay in power. Their general answer has been — bring a hundred thousand Conservative Jews to Israel and you will not have political problems.

Under the circumstances, it would seem wise for the proponents of Conservative Judaism to adopt a new approach, without abandoning those institutions which meet the needs of Western Jews in Israel and of some westernized Israelis. There is room for an ideological bloc, cutting across party lines and bringing together in common action those who are concerned with the emergent problems of Judaism. Among them is the incipient development of a Diaspora Judaism and of an Israeli Judaism, each with its subdivisions, but each responding to the needs of the respective Jewries. Given the inevitable increasing distance between Israel and the Diaspora in the light of different Judaisms, there will be a need to create bridges, instead of merely to mouth slogans about the centrality of Israel. Equally, the increasing need to rethink Jewish law as a result of the demands of sovereignty and the need for Jewish law to be a help in guiding Jews who are citizens of various countries on major issues of life and society must be on the agenda of every Jew concerned with the Jewish future. It is in these areas that Conservative Judaism has a contribution to make. By seeking to enlist opinion makers in Israel in a common endeavor to deal with these and related problems in concert with people abroad, on an ideological rather than a party basis, Conservative Judaism may find a new role.

In facing the challenges which have been imposed by time and by history, in breaking loose from the, by now, worn slogans and techniques and institutional arrangements that it has been using, Conservative Judaism may give itself renewed vitality and give the Jewish people new directions. If it wishes to establish its authenticity it cannot do so by competing with right wing Orthodoxy or Hasidism for the endorsement of the past. Rather, it must do so by demonstrating by idea, practice and preachment that it addresses itself meaningfully to the future. An age in which we have witnessed a revolution in Jewish history demands ideas commensurate with the opportunity.

# *Living in Two Worlds — Reform Judaism in the Diaspora*

W. GUNTHER PLAUT

REFORM JUDAISM IS THE WAY BY WHICH significant numbers of Jews come to the insights, obligations, and opportunities of Judaism. Reform cannot and must not be considered as existing in a Jewish vacuum, and while it is often defined and explained by its relationship to other branches of our religion, it must first and foremost be seen as part of the overarching prospects and perils, potentials and failures, hopes and disappointments of Judaism and the Jewish people as a whole.

Judaism may, of course, be seen from many perspectives. For the purposes of this essay it will be described by two paradigms, both of which shed light on its development. These two, admittedly eclectic, paradigmatic choices are one, Moses Mendelssohn and two, the Reform movement. The challenges facing the Jewish people and its faith will be discussed from these two perspectives.

## *The Paradigm of Mendelssohn*

Mendelssohn died just over 200 years ago, in 1786, and one might think that by today his role in Jewish history could be dispassionately discussed. It apparently cannot. In an important article, Werner Weinberg has detailed the continuing controversy about this unusual man whom some call pioneer and pathbreaker and others, destroyer and assimilator.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, the same heated discussion about Moses ben Menachem of Dessau continues to swirl around the nature and purpose of Reform Judaism.

A fourteen-year-old lad, unprepossessing in physical stature and lacking all financial means, Mendelssohn went to Berlin to study with his teacher, David Fränkel, who had become rabbi of the city. There he became first a tutor, then a clerk and, eventually, a partner in the house of Isaac Bernhard, a textile merchant and privileged *Schutzjude* of the city. Throughout his mature years Mendelssohn was a businessman to whom philosophy became an all-absorbing avocation, for ever since, as a young

1. Werner Weinberg, "Language Questions Relating to Moses Mendelssohn's Pentateuch Translation," *HUCA*, LV (1984), pp. 197-242.

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boy, he had read the *Morah Nevukhim*, he was fascinated by the possibilities of human reason.

But, in his time, the road to extra-Jewish philosophy, in fact to any general knowledge, was strewn with many obstacles. Foremost among these was language. Mendelssohn's native tongue was Western Yiddish or Judaeo-German as it was known; he could neither read nor write High German. Brought up in the disciplines of Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud, which were believed sufficient for all the needs of a Jewish boy, he stepped into the world of wider learning when, for the first time, he was able to read Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*. From then on there was no halting his search; he studied Latin and French, mathematics and medicine — all in his off-duty hours. He found a small group of like-minded Jews who, like him, were crossing the invisible but real ghetto wall into the outer world. For Mendelssohn, this journey did not require compromising his Jewish faith and practice. He remained a traditional Jew, though others — among them most of his children — would leave not only the ghetto but Judaism altogether.

Through his essays Mendelssohn won the grudging admiration of the philosophic establishment. This led the young man to believe that, because he labored in the field of pure thought, his ideas and formulations were considered entirely on their own merits and that his Jewishness was, in that respect, irrelevant. He was, of course, disappointed, but then — and we should not judge him harshly — he had no experience in living in two worlds; no Jew in his time had. The fact was that, in the Gentile world, he was considered a *unicum*, an intellectual mutant who could be praised, read and discussed, but who, in the end, was still inadmissible to the Academy because he was, and remained, a Jew. There were a few exceptional men among the German intelligentsia who thought differently, chief amongst them Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Germany's foremost literary critic and one of the nation's best-loved writers and dramatists. In his *Nathan the Wise* he immortalized his friend Mendelssohn as the model of tolerance and decency.

Mendelssohn accepted the dichotomy of his existence — which may be called “dual living” — as a natural condition of life. Amongst the Gentiles he was admired as a brilliant philosopher whose essays were written in elegant German; amongst the Jews (who could not read his writings) he remained an oddity held in some awe, a man who, because of his literary standing, could be enlisted as a battler for Jewish rights.

There was at this point no rabbinic opposition to him. That was to come later and would have nothing at all to do with his philosophy. Spinoza, some hundred years before, had been banned by the Jewish leadership because they feared that his theological views would be frowned upon by Gentile authorities and would endanger the Jewish community. No such fears existed in the case of Mendelssohn; he was, in fact, considered an unlooked-for asset to Berlin's and Prussia's Jewry.



For a few years Mendelssohn was able to live a charmed existence in both worlds, and he deluded himself into thinking that things would continue in this happy manner. The dream ended when a Swiss theologian, Johann Caspar Lavater, challenged him publicly to accept the Christian faith and, if he would not, to show reasons for his refusal. The challenge forced Mendelssohn to become a Jewish apologist, a role that he had not desired. Though he acquitted himself admirably and forced Lavater to apologize, the exercise left Mendelssohn thoroughly depressed. He had thought that he could keep the public philosopher and the private Jew neatly apart but now he had been forced to mesh the two. The result was that, henceforth, he would largely abandon his purely philosophic studies and writings and, after some years of near total literary inactivity, devote the remaining years of his life to Jewish concerns.

Here, his literary activities were of three kinds: he helped to found a Hebrew journal; he wrote *Jerusalem*, a treatise on reason and its relation to the Sinaitic revelation; and he translated the Psalms and, later, the Torah into German and provided the work with a commentary, known as *Biur*.

Among these three, the journal, *Ha-me-assef*, was a pathbreaking attempt to use Hebrew as a vehicle for modern expression and, though the magazine faltered after a while, it became the first example of Haskalah writing which was to flower a few decades later.

*Jerusalem* was Mendelssohn's philosophic Jewish testament. It was, in a way, written for himself, to show how a reasoning human being could continue his Jewish obligations to be immutable. It was his attempt to unite the universalist philosopher and the particular Jew, and it may be said to have been a failure. The argument that he made was, in the end, unsatisfactory. If today we would be trying to say what Mendelssohn was aiming at, we would simply aver that while the knowledge of God and the practice of goodness are in the reach of every human being, a Jew has special obligations that devolve upon him because of the covenant that God made with his people. But, to a philosopher of the eighteenth century, such a statement was less than what seemed to be required, for Mendelssohn lived at a time when Jews were second class citizens everywhere and their religion needed to be legitimized (*vide* Lavater). Mendelssohn's fellow Jews could well understand the overarching purposes of *Jerusalem*, though they did not develop any affection for the book's line of reasoning. In fact, they paid rather little attention to it — and, especially so, since it was written in German and Germany's Jews still had a poor knowledge of the language.

Mendelssohn resolved to create a remedy for this latter shortcoming. Using Hebrew script he rendered the Torah into the best possible high German of his day. There can be little doubt today that this rendition, accompanied by the Hebrew text, masoretic notes and his own circle's commentary, the *Biur*, had the overriding educational objective of teaching Jewish readers to read and speak the German tongue. True, in



various letters he also claimed to have had different objectives in mind, such as the education of his children, but the very contradictions of his asseverations lead one to conclude that he knew from the beginning that his translation would involve him in serious controversy. Therefore, much like Caro and the Rambam, he asserted that he was motivated by a much narrower vision.

While *Jerusalem* was a failure, the *Biur* (as the work was soon known) was a rousing success. It went through a number of editions and had imitators who, to speak in today's language, constructed "*Biur-compatible*" works. These, like the original, aroused the ire of various rabbis — and for various reasons. Thus, the redoubtable Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague criticized Mendelssohn not for the translation as such but for his high-brow, "extremely difficult German," for teachers of Torah would have to spend most of their time explaining German grammar, syntax and vocabulary and thus would have no time left for the study of Hebrew.<sup>2</sup>

But others simply thought that the *Biur*'s real aim was to make Jews into Germans and that, in short order, they would follow the attractions of the larger world and leave their Judaism behind. They banned the work and henceforth referred to Mendelssohn as a pied piper of assimilation. Even well into the 19th century, a writer like Peretz Smolenskin, himself a product of Haskalah, would deride Mendelssohn as the harbinger of Jewish destruction. He, like many others, remembered well that after the philosopher's early death most of his children did, indeed, forsake their father's faith, as did a significant number of Berlin's Jewish elite. Therefore, if Mendelssohn's own children went the way of conversion, surely his ideas must have laid the groundwork for this singular development. Was it perchance, so Mendelssohn's enemies reasoned, something he had really desired? And they answered, "Yes." Mendelssohn, they said, was responsible for opening the door to apostasy and to its handmaiden, the Reform movement.<sup>3</sup>

The allegation is false. However, Smolenskin's judgment has persisted to this day and has helped to perpetuate the stereotype of the Reform movement as the vanguard of assimilation and conversion.

The historian knows that apostasy was the result of two factors: the breakdown of the ghetto in the wake of enlightenment, and the perceived impossibility for a Jew to remain Jewish and yet take advantage of the new opportunities. One was either a Jew or a Christian (nominally or otherwise), there being then no middle ground. As long as a Jew did not formally renounce his/her adherence to Judaism and its people, he/she was considered a Jew and, despite the widening of opportunities, there was no access to meaningful participation in the life of the larger community.

2. Quoted by Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn, A Biographical Study* (University of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 382-383.

3. Smolenskin, quoted by Weinberg, p. 201.

Apostasy was, therefore, most often a socially and not religiously motivated act, but, of course, the apostate was, in most instances, permanently lost to the Jewish people.

Only in the broader sense may it be said that Mendelssohn was the spiritual forefather of Reform, in that he attempted to make his contribution to human thought and at the same time live as a Jew. He was meticulously observant, deeply learned, and confessed proudly that he was a member of his people. Living in two worlds had its problems, as he found out in the Lavater affair or when he was refused admission to the Royal Academy, but, on the whole, he succeeded and thereby showed that it could be done. It turned out, however, that many Jews found this duality hard to manage. When there seemed to be no other alternative they left the Jewish fold, and only when an alternative was developed by the Reform movement did the hemorrhage of apostasy begin to subside. Reform was the alternative to Jewish living which the Mendelssohn model could not provide.

### *The Paradigm of Reform*

It is essential to understand the genesis of Reform Judaism from the perspective of its own age and not through late-twentieth century spectacles. The movement arose because Jews who had stepped out into the larger world and had become acquainted with German, French and English culture found themselves unable to live satisfactorily in both the Jewish and Gentile worlds. They did not want to resolve the tension by leaving Judaism and began to look for ways to reform their faith sufficiently to satisfy their own intellectual and spiritual needs and, at the same time, stem the rising tide of apostasy. They advocated a more flexible approach to Halakhah and searched the sources for validating interpretations.

But they found that the *Shulḥan Arukh* was, in itself, a ghetto document and, in the hands of its official interpreters, proved unsuitable for the process of dual living. Caro and his contemporaries had existed in an environment which was controlled by Gentile authorities, and the code for Jewish living, therefore, needed to say nothing of these controls. It could address itself entirely to the inner world of the Jews and their obligations. It did not speak to the needs of police and defense, water supplies and public hygiene. These were handled by Gentiles (Turks, in Caro's case) and were not in the realm of Jewish concern. The *Shulḥan Arukh* did not address the problems of Jews living in both the Gentile and the Jewish worlds; it did not advise how one could remain both a faithful Jew and, at the same time, be part of the larger society. Absent such advice, those who wished to remain Jews either stayed in the Jewish intellectual ghetto or adjusted their Jewish way of life sufficiently to meet their needs. Reform was born as a result of these acculturating pressures (and so were, later, Conservatism and modern Orthodoxy).

In the two hundred years since Mendelssohn's death these pressures have been supplanted by new ones, but the problem of living in two worlds has not basically changed.

Today, one need no longer become a Christian in order to "make it" in the world at large. In contrast to communist societies, Western countries do not demand identification with the dominant faith. A born Jew needs to make no declaration of disaffiliation from Judaism if he/she no longer wishes to live a Jewish life. Western civilization has provided the refuge of secular neutralism, where the national culture becomes the regnant "religion." One does not have to confess any faith to be American, Canadian, French or English. Today, the hemorrhage of disaffiliation does not come from Christian but from secular pressures. Reform today and tomorrow will, therefore, continue to fill the essential role of providing a way for Jews to live in two worlds at the same time. The parameters of the problem have been altered, but not the problem itself.

The most extreme example is provided by the incidence of mixed marriages. They are created — stereotypical canards notwithstanding — by the open society, and not by Reform. But Reform says to Jews who have intermarried: even for you there is a place among us. We will help you live in two worlds at the same time, however difficult it may be. By its very openness to dual acculturation, Reform *attracts* the intermarried, though it does not *create* them (the best statistics say that most intermarrying couples come from the unaffiliated).

Reform Judaism is the one movement which boldly faces this problem. One may disagree with its pronouncement on patrilineal identification, but one must recognize it as an honest attempt to meet a major crisis created by the open society. For freedom presents a greater challenge to Jewish living in the Diaspora than exclusion ever did. (Living Jewishly in Israel is another matter. There, the ground rules are different, though there, too, the need for reforming halakhic stringencies remains. But this article does not extend to a consideration of Israeli society.)

The open society is based on autonomy in the field of personal living. For the Jew, therefore, the tension between autonomy and authority becomes crucial and, for Reform Jews (who accept autonomy as an axiom), the attenuation of authority has become a major problem. Orthodox Jews continue to consider Torah and Tradition to be God-given; Reform Jews generally do not, certainly not in the literal sense. They lack, therefore, the presence of a commanding Halakhah and will accept a portion of its demands for reasons other than its divine origin. Thus, they may accept for themselves the yoke of Torah because they want to show solidarity with other Jews; or they may do it out of respect for a parent, spouse, or even child; or, as with Franz Rosenzweig, they may find God speaking to them out of a *mizvah* that they have voluntarily taken upon themselves. Convincing a Jew to make such a choice is a formidable task, often accompanied by failures.

Most notable among these is the greatly lessened attention to private and public worship. One seeks to stand in God's presence only when one chooses to do so, not when one must. Broken habits of yesteryear are not easily mended, especially when so many of one's friends and associates choose the path of non-observance.

Autonomy thus appears to validate one's life style, whatever it is. There can be little doubt that here lies Reform's greatest peril. It has to face its implication and has so far not yet done so to the fullest. For its leadership, too, is caught up in this tension, and without its own resolve little change will come about in the movement. However, there is now a growing minority which, in its own life, has confronted this challenge and, though its numbers are relatively small, it provides an important thrust. Changes are often brought about by determined minorities.

But Reform faces not only perils; it also has enormous opportunities in its grasp.

First among these is the recovery of the prophetic impulse. By its natural inclination the movement is open to all human needs. Reform Jews are prone to participate in the reforming activities of society at large, be they social, cultural, political, or intellectual. Their leaders are apt to be among those who concern themselves with peace, disarmament or ecological questions. They will be prominent in movements for the resolution of racial and social inequities and for increased understanding among various faith and culture groups. Not surprisingly, that is true for Israel as well, where Reform rabbis challenge the social negligence of the religious establishment.

Because Reform is attuned to dual living, social justice and ethics occupy as large a portion of its teaching as do religious rites and traditions. In turn, Reform tends to attract those Jews who are ready to make a commitment to the public weal and it has, therefore, become the gathering place of an elite of communal leaders in a variety of fields.

A second opportunity for Reform lies in the fact that, by nature, it is experimental. Here it clearly has the advantage over more conservative Jewish groupings. The latter should welcome, and not deride or condemn, these efforts of serving God and the Jewish people. Reform has opened new doors and vistas. Even its failures have become learning opportunities for everyone.

A third opportunity is provided by Reform's experimental approach to teaching. For a long time it has pioneered in educational techniques and approaches, many of which have been adopted by other branches of Judaism. The day school movement in Reform, though a latecomer, has already made notable contributions and will no doubt continue to do so as its experience expands. Here, the particular weight of Reform experience in educating children for two worlds at the same time can best be utilized. Integrated curricula, which teach both knowledge *per se* and Jewish value systems are the great frontiers of Jewish education.

And, fourthly, the very liberalism which is at the heart of Reform makes it a chief engine for Jewish unity. True, there are forces within the movement which tend toward radicalization and preach disregard for other opinions, but they do not represent the mainstream, which presses for accommodation and understanding. In this respect, too, Reform has an advantageous position. Orthodoxy tends toward exclusion, Reform toward inclusion; the former toward non-acceptance of others' legitimacy, the latter toward whole-hearted acceptance. Future historians will be better able to assess the contribution which Reform is making in this area than are we who are still in the midst of struggle and controversy.

It is a dangerous business to prophesy. Based on our perception of Reform as one of the paradigms of Judaism we venture these predictions:

The transitory phase of Jewish responses to both modernity and the free society will continue for some time to come. During this period Diaspora Jewry will shrink, but the Reform movement will not (or not substantially). It may even grow further because of its attraction as a way to live both as a Jew and as a fully functioning member of society.

As a *conditio sine qua non* Reform will insist on meeting the need of Jews to know themselves. Study of Torah in the narrower and wider sense will be an increasingly prominent aspect of Reform.

Worship and the performance of other mizvot will be demands accepted by a small but determined and often tone-setting minority. This inner core will counteract the spreading agnosticism of significant portions of the membership.

Despite the current controversy over patrilineality, Reform and the liberal wing of Conservatism will draw closer together, while the Conservative right wing will be more and more identified with Orthodoxy.

Israel will continue to have its impact on all Jews, including Reform. But as the liberal and, therefore, critical element of society, Reform Jews will bring to their affection for Israel a more critical and intellectual attitude, which will be different from the emotional "guts" approach of other Jews who will be more accepting and forgiving of Israel's foibles. Here, Reform leaders will have to address a related problem. Because many Jews-by-choice in its midst lack the initial ethnic pull of Israel, Reform will have to raise the love of Israel to a central level of its teaching.

As the twentieth century winds down, Orthodoxy continues to guard the flame of Judaism, while Reform remains its principal torchbearer. Orthodoxy is more likely to respond to the problems of dual living by withdrawing largely into the Jewish world, thereby leaving concern for wider concerns to others, and especially Reform Jews. This has been the practice during a good part of our century, and there is little reason to think that it will change in the foreseeable future. The torchbearers and the flame-keepers have their distinct tasks and make their special contributions to Jewish health and survival.

# *Reconstructionism: Judaism For Today*

JACOB J. STAUB

WHEN JEWS TODAY LOOK INTO THE FUTURE, we do so with an embattled crisis mentality. Worrying about Jewish survival is a hoary Jewish tradition. Prophets railed against idolatrous Israelites, rabbis in the talmudic era strove desperately to get the *amei ha-arez* (the common folk) to accept the uniformities of rabbinical injunctions, medieval *geonim* and *nesi'im* regularly declared that failure to recognize their authority spelled doom — all with the conviction that Judaism would not survive unless Jews embraced their particular vision of the Jewish life.

Today, as we wring our hands about the progressive assimilation of North American Jews, about the widespread acceptance of such values as individual autonomy that appear to undermine communal authority, about Jewish ignorance and lack of ritual observance, it is important that we remember to place our anxieties in context. If there has been a constant that runs through the history of the Jewish people, it has been the perpetual need for Jews to embrace ever new circumstances in bold and creative ways. It is out of that process that our vibrant traditions have emerged. If we find ourselves in perpetual crisis, it is important for us to realize that we are not endangered by the *crises*, but, rather, by our failure to use them as spurs to new, unpredictable developments.

North American Jews now face — and will face even more in the next century — the unprecedented challenge of their full integration into the surrounding societies. Heretofore, we have been able to offset the effects of our political emancipation in Western societies by relying on successive infusions of immigrants from more traditional Jewish communities — our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents — who knew firsthand what Jewish life had been like over there and who represented our connection to the past. Thus, all forms of Jewish life that developed in the past 150 years — the structures of our synagogues and federations, our religious movements, our means of attachment to the State of Israel, our modernizing theologies — are best regarded as transitional adaptations to a radically new situation. Now, with no remaining reservoirs of immigrants, we face the future on our own. If Jewish life in North America is to flourish, it will be because we have become a generation of *ba'alei teshuvah*

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— Jews who pursue lives of greater Jewish meaning and intensity than did the generation before us.

That is the mandate which Reconstructionist Jews now assume. We seek the Judaization of Jewish lives, however, not in a retreat to the past, but, rather, in a direct embrace of the challenges that face us. It will be many decades, perhaps centuries, before historians will be able accurately to assess the North American experiment in Judaism. We believe, however, that that success will correlate directly with the energetic initiative and boldness of vision that we apply to the entirely new set of circumstances which we face.

In open societies where Jewish identification is voluntaristic, the pivotal question must always be: Why would a person of Jewish lineage *choose* to pursue a Jewish life? Nostalgia and filial obligation have taken us as far as they can. It is now up to those of us who have experienced the richness of Jewish civilization to clarify why Jewish living is meaningful, enriching, and attractive, and to devise strategies and programs that enable others to join us.

Reconstructionists often call themselves post-halakhic, by which we designate our recognition that the political emancipation of Jews has rendered authorities powerless to enforce their edicts. Without rabbinic enforcement, Jews must now choose whether to submit voluntarily to Halakhah, and most Jews have chosen not to do so. Our integration into secular societies, however, has not only allowed us to ignore rabbinically pronounced edicts; it has also bestowed upon us a set of dearly held values that conflict directly with the halakhic process — the sanctity of personal conscience, the ethical necessity of balancing legitimate priorities with the demands of ritual observance, the commitment to including people in the decisions that affect them. Therefore, if we want contemporary Jews to become serious about Judaism, we must present them with a rich version of Jewish civilization that has compelling moral power.

### *Participatory Communities*

A crucial part of our response to these challenges is the formation of participatory communities. The pre-modern *kehillah* is beyond replication and there is no promise that contemporary Jews, in our diversity, will soon unite in more than umbrella organizations. Our need has not diminished, however, for close-knit communities that provide nurturing settings for our common quests and support systems in our times of need. Whether formed as independent *havurot*, *havurot* within larger synagogues, or synagogues of moderate size, participatory communities offer Jews the opportunity to make Judaism their own.

In part, participatory communities are a strategic necessity, given the lack of experience that most Jews today have with the central sacred actions of the tradition. When rabbis and cantors monopolize service



leading, Torah and *haftarah* reading, *divrei Torah*, sermons, officiation at life-cycle events, adult study teaching, and decision-making about community practices, congregants are relegated to being passive observers. Our experience is that authentic Jewish learning and involvement occurs best when laypeople study their traditions because they are responsible — for composing a service, for delivering a *devar Torah*, for voting on congregational policy.

Participatory communities are more than strategy, however; they are the closest that we come to the ideal of community in our atomized society. When they function well, they address directly what may be the most important needs of contemporary Jews: the need for support groups in which we can bare our souls and on which we can rely in times of personal crisis; the need for an environment in which we can express our doubts, conflicts, and ignorance, and experiment in our spiritual quests with others in similar situations in a supportive, nonjudgmental atmosphere; the need to find Jewish contexts in which we can share ourselves with other Jews.

The North American Jewish community has succeeded marvelously in building stable institutions; we now must turn to the task of using our resources to meet the immediate personal quests of Jews: for meaning; for a sense of the transcendent; for a Jewish *hevrah* that shares our moments of celebration; for comfort and aid during divorce, depression, family illness and crisis, unemployment, and ennui; for a Jewish context in which to express our political commitments in the larger society. Jewish universes of meaning are best constructed not by theologians, but by personal interaction. The power with which the secular society invests the value of autonomy is such that our most difficult struggle is in the creation of meaningful communities that enable Jews to transcend their personal preoccupations. It is for this reason that Reconstructionist groups, since the 1950s, have most often begun as *havurot* and that so many of our groups have formal support system networks.<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, theoretical foundations that underlie the practice. In brief, the Reconstructionist definition of Judaism, as the *evolving* religious civilization of the Jewish *people*, keeps us open to the inevitable and desirable changes that occur when Jews are empowered with serious responsibilities for constructing their Jewish lives. Our historical perspective — our belief that the practices and beliefs of our traditions are best understood as the creations of Jewish people like ourselves, some, but not all, of whose circumstances resemble ours — is a powerful tool that loosens our timidity about tinkering with our Jewish inheritance. The study of Jewish history debunks the myth that our traditions have been uniform and unchanging in the past.

1. See Harriet Feiner, "The Synagogue as a Support System," *Reconstructionist* 50/4 (Jan.-Feb. 1985): 25-30. See also, Charles Silberman, "Rabbis, Doctors, and the Need to Listen," *Reconstructionist* 52/4 (Jan.-Feb. 1987).

But more than giving license to innovation, the historical perspective also gives us the opportunity to reclaim traditions as our own without having to accept their divine, halakhic authority. For many Jews, traditional practices are made more meaningful when they are seen as human responses to historical circumstances than when they are accepted in their specifics as God-given. Some Jews need to feel commanded by the details of the halakhic system. Others, while not prepared to be commanded by every jot and tittle of the halakhic system, do want clear and simple answers about major points of belief and practice. Many, however, do not feel so commanded, and we do Jewish civilization an injustice by assuming that intelligent, sensitive Jews will not embrace their traditions without authoritative pronouncements. Quite the reverse, some of our best Jews avoid observance because they resent pontifical pronouncements.

Judaism is so rich and various, so full of opportunities for learning and personal growth on a host of levels, that we should not be surprised when people take the opportunities offered for increasing involvement. It is quite possible to feel commanded and sanctified through involvement in the quests of millenia of Jews, without feeling commanded by the particular halakhic formulations of specific rabbinic authorities.

Of course, to those who assume that Jewish survival depends on our adherence to the inherited structures of rabbinic authority and halakhic uniformity, all of this spells the demise of Judaism through anarchy. It is our fervent belief, however, that Judaism will cease to flourish in democratic societies if old solutions are applied to unprecedented circumstances. If Judaism is to speak to the religious needs of Jews, rabbis must become enablers, exemplars of sensitive, Jewishly serious people who can share their own insights as well as those of the past, Jews who can learn as well as teach. All Jews must be given the responsibility to learn enough to make Judaism their own, for when Jews are helped to struggle with their traditions they produce a Jewish civilization that is loyal to the present and future as well as to the past.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Jewish Difference*

This generation of North American Jews, and the generations that will follow, do not have our parents' need to modernize, to reformulate our Jewish identities in ways that enable us to participate fully in secular democracies. Those struggles have been won, perhaps too completely. Fifty years ago, Jews struggled to become Americans; today Americans struggle to become Jews.

2. For a discussion on new rabbinic roles, see the Symposium on "Democracy and Lay-Rabbinic Relations," *Reconstructionist* 51/1 (Sept. 1985) and Lawrence Kushner, "Rabbinic Power," *Reconstructionist* 52/1 (Sept. 1986). For an example of community decision making, see Sidney H. Schwarz, "A Synagogue with Principles," *Reconstructionist* 50/7 (June 1985): 21-25.

To do so, we need more than the communal contexts described above; we need to rediscover and proclaim those ways in which living Jewishly is more enriching than not doing so. What follows are brief indications of four areas in which Reconstructionists are at work and which ought to occupy the energies of all Jews if Judaism is to remain a viable choice in the coming decades. We cannot continue to rely on the threats of anti-Semites and the inspiration of the State of Israel if we want more than financial contributions and nominal affiliations.

*The Sacred.* The danger of the historical perspective is that it can lead to a reductive historicism that strips the regimen of ritual practice of its sanctity. North American secular culture has given us many things — liberty, professional opportunity, material comfort, cultural enrichment — but it does not provide ritual practices that point beyond themselves to ultimate realities. Though Reconstructionists reject the traditional claim that the *kedushah* (sanctity) of Jewish symbols and symbolic actions derives literally from divine commandment, we do believe that Jewish practices possess an inherent sanctity because they have functioned so effectively as opportunities for transcendent experiences. This has been given additional weight by the cumulative and diverse *kavanot* (intentionalities) experienced through them by Jews throughout the ages.

The *birkhot hashahar* (morning benedictions), for example, possess power far beyond their literal meaning. They are one of the few places where we Jews have developed consciousness of our bodies. They call attention to the gift of physical well-being, and they help us to start the day with a sense of gratitude for being alive.

One of the ways they come alive is when we study the diverse interpretations attributed to them by preceding generations. We discover a host of ways of regarding nature and the harmonious relationship between body and soul that are not available in the secular culture. In uttering them, I am connected to all of those who have spoken them — before me and after me. Some were philosophers striving for rational truths; some were poets reveling in the beauty of nature and mystics whose consciousness was ascending through the *sefirot*; others were pious artisans intent on meticulous performance of the 613 commandments; still others were ambivalent about the value of their utterances. By saying or doing what they said and did, I am transported beyond the everyday concerns of my life to a dimension quite distinct.

The more one learns about the experiences of Jews, the more their voices can be heard, and the greater is the sanctity of their words and actions. We cannot, nor do most of us want to, return to a romanticized past. Indeed, we do not advocate the acceptance of words that conflict with our beliefs. By adopting our ancestors' symbolic universe, however, we can begin to see the world through their eyes. Often, we find that their

perspectives sanctify and enrich the quality of our lives.<sup>3</sup>

*Prayer.* Most liberal Jews do not know how to pray — because they lack a mastery of Hebrew, because prayer is a spiritual discipline that requires time and regular practice, and because we have so much difficulty putting aside our self-concern to make room for a focus on questions of larger scope.

We often *claim* that our discomfort with the *siddur* is because we are embarrassed by the literal connotations of its words. This embarrassment, however, is easily addressed through serious study that opens us to meaningful perspectives. A study of the history of our heritage reveals that we are not the first to question the literal meaning of statements made about God.

We must affirm, however, not only that our *tefillot* (prayers) are not embarrassing, but that a regular cycle of prayer is a valuable enterprise — that there is something in the human psyche that our traditions refer to as “soul” which can, and should, be nourished and developed through a regular discipline of individual and communal meditation, *davening*, and song. Synagogue services have served an important function in providing venues for socializing and community building. For many Jews who yearn for the transcendent, however, that is not sufficient. One need not believe that God intervenes supernaturally in human affairs to seek the transcendent and admit a realm beyond scientific explanation, to regard experiences that transport us beyond ourselves as essential nourishment for the spirit.<sup>4</sup>

For many individuals, once again, the only way back into the Jewish liturgical cycle is through experimentation — by including new prayers or revising old ones, through song and dance and chanting and body movement, by expanding our images of God to include the feminine as well as the masculine, the personal and political as well as the majestic and awesome. At some point in our history, Jews may have been well served when rabbis limited liturgical innovation, but it is our experience that we now must muster all of our creativity and courage to break through the overwhelming secularism of our day. When the core of a group learns to pray through innovative means, the group becomes able to respond to traditional prayers that were once inaccessible. Only one who knows how to pray can utilize the traditional liturgy in the way that it was intended to be used.

*Political and Social Relevance.* The value of Church-State separation in

3. On symbolic meaning, see Robin Goldberg, “Seeing and Seeing Through: An Approach to Myth, Metaphor, and Meaning,” *Reconstructionist* 50/7 (June 1985): 9-14. On ritual practice, see Jacob J. Staub, “The Sabbath in Reconstructionism,” *JUDAISM* 31/1 (Winter 1982): 63-69.

4. See Arthur Green, “Neo-Hasidism and our Theological Struggles,” *Raayonot* 4/3 (Summer 1984): 11-17; and Richard Orloff, “My God and How I Got There,” *Reconstructionist* 49/8 (July-Aug. 1984): 13-18.

America has been misapplied to the internal life of Jewish communities. Our spiritual life withers in irrelevance when we divorce it from our activities outside of the synagogue. In attempts to build a broad, nonalienating consensus, synagogues and federations alike have focused on Israel and defense-related causes, avoiding social and political actions about which there is no unanimity. People whose *Jewish* passions involve matters of *tikkun olam* (the repair of the world) not related to a narrowly Jewish agenda have thus had difficulty finding their place in the world of Jewish institutions.

Reconstructionist groups are no more homogeneous in their political views than others. Most of them, however, share the conviction that it is not sufficient to discuss controversial issues without taking action. In many cases, a consensus has been developed that the community as a whole should support its segments as they pursue their interpretation of *gemilut hasadim*. A *havurah* can be formed, for example, that declares sanctuary for a Central American refugee even if large segments of the community doubt the wisdom and correctness of such an action.<sup>5</sup> We will always have Republicans, Democrats and others among us. It would be to the advantage of most communities, however, to acknowledge those differences and to encourage members to express their social action commitments as part of their Jewish commitments rather than in addition to them. Otherwise, we are not holy communities, and our prayers are not relevant.<sup>6</sup>

*Personal Ethics.* The time is long overdue for liberal Jews to wrestle with the implications of our Jewish commitments for the ethics that we practice in our personal lives. Does the Jewish identification of a corporate executive, attorney, businessperson, or physician affect the way she or he conducts him/herself at work? Can Jews involved in the challenges of childraising, marital fidelity, or the treatment of aging parents rely on our traditions for guidance? Beyond halakhic dietary laws, are there foods that Jews should or should not eat because of the way that they are produced?

Most Jews will not be bound by halakhic pronouncements that direct their ethical choices. More than ever before, however, they are looking for guidance about the most important issues in their lives, and they find the Jewish community's answers to be either wooden or saccharin. Jewish civilization will become meaningful when Jews who are immersed in Jewish study and living begin to help people to struggle on the deep and complex levels on which they themselves operate.

It is terribly important, therefore, for liberal Jews to revive our traditions of *musar* (ethics): by engaging in discussions of what is right and

5. See Brian Walt, "Sanctuary: Building Community," *Reconstructionist* 52/4 (Jan.-Feb. 1987).

6. For an example of social action made Jewish, see Arthur Waskow, "Interpreting the Flood Story in the Nuclear Age," *Reconstructionist* 49/4 (Feb. 1984): 11-16.

wrong — starting with traditional views and then expanding and revising them on the basis of the best moral thought in contemporary culture and clearly articulated values — and by providing supportive Jewish contexts in which individuals can struggle with their own dilemmas. This is yet another way in which the responsibilities of membership in Jewish organizations need to be expanded to include more than the paying of dues.<sup>7</sup>

Why live Jewishly? Because the treasures in our traditions enrich, offering a community in which one can pursue sanctity, transcendence, deeds of lovingkindness, ethical values. Obviously, the list here is limited, and Jews need not all choose to emphasize identical parts of their heritage. Our goal, however, must be to be able to answer that question in compelling ways.

### *Facing Sociological Trends*

How alien our forebears would feel were they to confront the current and projected demographics of North American Jews: woman professionals, two-career families, single-parent families, divorce, intermarriage, ten thousand or more Jews by choice each year, gay couples and synagogues, Jews devoted to Tibetan Buddhism and transcendental meditation. The list goes on and will frighten anyone who believes that it is in past precedent that our future lies.

The Reconstructionist response is that of inclusiveness.<sup>8</sup> The demographic realities of our day require ever new efforts to make room among us for Jews in all of our diversity. On the one hand, we are taking enormous risks, and we are likely to face massive failures. We believe that the alternative, however, is the loss of Jewish meaning for most North American Jews.

We are decidedly *not* advocates of establishing a lowest common denominator over which anything goes, as I hope will be clear from what has preceded. Our communities demand more of their members than do most others. What we demand, however, is not an adherence to a preordained set of practices or beliefs, but, rather, a serious commitment to learning about and experimenting with things Jewish, to sharing one's insights and dilemmas with other Jews in an atmosphere of common

7. See Rebecca T. Alpert, "Ethical Decision Making," *Reconstructionist* 50/7 (June 1985): 15-20; and Arthur Waskow and Rebecca T. Alpert, "Ethical Kashrut," *Reconstructionist* 52/5 (March 1987). For our approach to moral education, see Jeffrey Schein, "Moral Education in Jewish Schools," *Reconstructionist* 50/5 (March 1985): 15-18 and 51/3 (Dec. 1985): 9-13.

8. On intermarriage, see *Reconstructionist* 49/2 & 3 (Nov. & Dec.-Jan. 1984). On our approach to outreach see *Reconstructionist* 51/7 & 8 (June & July-Aug. 1986). On woman rabbis, see Sandy Sasso, "Women in the Rabbinate," *Reconstructionist* 49/5 (March 1985): 18-20 and Joy Levitt, "Woman Rabbis: A Pyrrhic Victory?" *Reconstructionist* 50/4 (Jan.-Feb. 1985): 19-24. On patrilineal descent, see Richard Hirsh, "Jewish Identity and Patrilineal Descent," *Reconstructionist* 49/5 (March 1984): 25-28, and Jacob J. Staub, "A Reconstructionist View of Patrilineal Descent," *JUDAISM* 34 (1985): 97-106. On gay Jews, see *Reconstructionist* 51/2 (Oct.-Nov. 1985).

quest. We require a level of learning, struggle, and commitment to community that is far from automatic in any culture. Our approach is not for everyone. The prospective rewards, however, are great, and the products of our efforts will be very valuable for all Jews and for the future of the Jewish community.

The full inclusion of women in Jewish life can serve as a paradigm here. Not very long ago, it was common to hear that Jews could never accept women in the rabbinic role, that *kippot* and *tallitot* were inherently male symbols, that men would not attend services unless they, and only they, were required for the *minyan*. The speed and ease with which the liberal Jewish community has come to terms with gender equality is instructive; we are enriched, not diminished, when we include those formerly excluded, when we open ourselves to the infusion of new, albeit initially threatening, energy and ideas.

The number of alienated Jews today is staggering, but so is the untapped reservoir of yearning for things Jewish. Not all, perhaps not even most, people of Jewish lineage can be expected to return. Our energies will be spent most productively by working with those who seek to return, rather than by appeasing those who do not. But the success of the Jewish enterprise in Western democracies depends on our willingness to let our future be written in ways that we cannot now conceive.

To do so, we need to rethink what we mean by community. In our open society, "community" cannot — nor do we want it to — connote homogeneity. The idea startles: What can our future promise if being part of the Jewish community no longer connotes a predictable liturgy, a prescribed lifestyle, a consensus about the purpose and meaning of Jewish existence? Our vision is of a community that is united in common support of our pluralism, that is delighted with, rather than threatened by, disagreement, that acknowledges and even applauds the fact that Jews who embrace our traditions seriously inevitably will employ different modes of *darshanut* (interpretation) upon their heritage.<sup>9</sup> Not all of our interpretations will endure the tests of time, but some will; and, out of others yet new, possibilities for creative Jewish living will emerge.

9. See Martha Ackelsberg, "Rabbis Are People Too," *Reconstructionist* 52/1 (Sept. 1986).



#### IV.

## ***Zionism – Its Past And Its Future***

### ***Zionism: Past Achievements and Future Programs***

**FRIEDA S. LEWIS**

THERE ARE SOME WHO WOULD DISPUTE THE very theme of this essay: "Zionism: Unfinished Business." To them, the central tasks of Zionism have been achieved. The problems that Zionism set out to address have been resolved and its goals have been accomplished. We are now living in a post-Zionist era, they say, and there is no longer any reason for a Zionist movement to exist alongside the State of Israel. Zionism, according to this point of view, was an historical movement that aimed to achieve specific historical goals.

Indeed, Zionism proved to be one of the greatest and most successful revolutions in history. It transformed an ancient dream into a modern political movement that produced a revolution which has changed the course of Jewish history, established a sovereign Jewish state and brought the Jewish people, as a nation, into the world community of nation states. Zionism restored a nation's identity and Israel is a source of constant pride among the Jewish people. It has given Jews a renewed sense of collective creativity. Zionism, too, has brought about the redemption of hundreds of thousands of our people from a destiny of tragedy, humiliation and death.

For the greater part of its history, Zionism attracted the support of a minority within the Jewish community. Today, the entire Jewish world, with very few and marginal exceptions, accepts the notion that the Jewish state is crucial to Jewish survival.

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But the aspirations of Zionism go beyond Jewish survival, for while Zionism sought the creation of an independent Jewish state, it aspired to a special kind of statehood, consonant with the prophetic ideals of justice and peace. The state and land of Israel are essential instruments, but instruments, nonetheless, through which the Jewish people could aspire towards a higher order of national, cultural and moral existence. Zionism never viewed a Jewish state as only a haven for Jews fleeing oppression; it looked upon Jewish statehood as the center for renewed Jewish creativity unencumbered by "abnormal" Jewish existence in the Diaspora.

Thus, the business of Zionism has not been completed. After almost forty years of Jewish statehood, we are still only at the beginning of the enormously complex process of creating a model Jewish society. The great majority of the Jewish people has not yet found it necessary, or even desirable, to live within the borders of the Zionist state. Assimilation has progressed at an alarming rate. The Jewish people is still subject to anti-Semitic victimization in many areas around the globe, and peace with Israel's neighbors has not yet been achieved.

Zionism was, and continues to be, a national liberation movement, determined to reverse the course of Jewish history by overcoming threats to Jews from *without*. Modern Zionism became the means by which the Jewish people sought to reverse a deterministic view of history which regarded the Jews as eternal victims. But, as a major Zionist historian has pointed out, Zionism strove, also, to be a revolutionary movement from *within*. Herzl's vision of national redemption via a sovereign state could never be detached from Zionism's vision of restructuring the traditional patterns of Jewish life and reshaping Jewish society. Zionism's revolution was that it sought not only to free the Jewish people, but to build it anew. For Zionists, Jewish statehood was a necessary means, but not the end. As the familiar Zionist song proclaimed, "We came to the Land to build and to be rebuilt." Zionism spoke not only of a new state, but of a new society and a new person. In short, the purpose of Zionism was to solve centuries-old problems confronting the Jewish people both externally and internally. On both levels, it has been eminently successful.

On the external level, classical Zionism claimed that the loss of independent statehood was the primary cause of Jewish distress. One might presuppose that Zionism's goal of recovering Jewish sovereignty was no different from that of other nineteenth century national liberation movements. But, unlike them, Zionism arose out of the unique Jewish condition of homelessness. As one student of Zionist history has suggested, it was no coincidence that one of Zionism's earliest political achievements, the Balfour Declaration, spoke of a "Jewish National Home." The term accurately conveyed the Jewish People's special predicament.

Jewish history before the creation of the State largely consisted of what Jews had suffered, endured, survived and sometimes overcome, but not often of what they themselves had initiated. With the emergence of

Jewish statehood, Jewish history entered a new stage of independence and autonomy. As Abba Eban is fond of saying, Israel's existence and the legitimacy of Jewish statehood is something to be proclaimed; it is not something to be argued about. No one should have to ask anybody to recognize Israel's right to exist, because that right is independent of anyone's recognition of it.

Zionism's revolutionary achievement, then, was the liberation of the Jewish nation from its historical fate of dispersion, homelessness, persecution and the danger of losing its collective identity. Moreover, although the majority of Jews live elsewhere, the State of Israel has unquestionably become the central focus of Jewish life throughout the world.

On the internal level, Zionism also called for the restructuring of the social and economic patterns of Jewish life that had prevailed in the Diaspora. There were two major schools of thought with respect to the kind of society that Zionism should seek to build. One suggested that Jews had lived an abnormal existence and that the Jewish state would "normalize" Jewish life; the Jewish nation would be like all other nations. Others proposed something more far-reaching. The Jewish state should be a "light unto the nations," and if Zionism was unable to create a model society based on traditional Jewish values of justice and morality, the state it sought to create would be incapable of playing the revolutionary role in Jewish life for which Zionists had toiled. Undeniably, the existence of the State of Israel has had positive effects on Jewish life in the Diaspora. No other concern has so often mobilized the energies of world Jewry. Despite the problems, virtually everyone who has visited there has had the spiritually uplifting experience of a connectedness to the entire Jewish people. Many return with a new or renewed sense of commitment not only to Israel, but to Jewish life in its broadest sense.

Zionism, then, has been a success story, but it has not been completed. Its primary aim, the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, was never the ultimate solution to the problems that Jews have confronted throughout their history. Nor ought we expect that an ideology which emerged from the conditions of Jewish existence over a hundred years ago should serve as a solution to the problems that face the Jewish people in our own and future generations. The past, no matter how successful, cannot serve as a complete model for the future, nor does it always provide adequate guidance for current problems.

Perhaps classical Zionism promised too much and its messianic ambitions for dealing with Jewish problems may have created unrealistic expectations. Historical Zionism seemed to say that when the Jewish people would reside in its own land, within its own state, it would no longer be vulnerable to social divisions and class distinctions, economic collapse, physical destruction or spiritual assimilation. Classical Zionism often used utopian rhetoric and projected a vision of a messianic age in which violence, inequality and persecution would be supplanted by social har-

mony, peace and human tranquility. But the State of Israel does not guarantee the security and welfare of the Jewish people nor does it assure a full and creative Jewish life within it.

What, then, is the unfinished business of Zionism? The unfinished agenda of Zionism, at least for the foreseeable future, can be viewed in terms of the two basic problems which classic Zionism sought to overcome: the external threat to the survival of the Jewish people, and the problems internal to Jewish society.

Unquestionably, the existence of the State of Israel has enhanced Jewish security and has diminished the threat of physical annihilation to a degree unimaginable only forty years ago. Yet, the early Zionists did not anticipate an ongoing Jewish-Arab conflict. No one ever considered that Israel would be established through war or that this war would become a nearly permanent feature of life there.

It is ironic that, in many respects, the establishment of the State increased anti-Semitism rather than diminishing it. Especially in the Arab world, it has created new foci of anti-Semitism, while, in addition, Communist hostility to Israel and the Jewish people poses a threat all its own.

Virtually all Jews today, whether they call themselves Zionist or pro-Israel, are — and must be — concerned with ensuring the physical security of the State, even though there may be differences of views as to how it is to be achieved. One way is continually to devote the major efforts and resources of the Jewish community towards assuring ongoing American political, economic and military defense support.

While we Jews in the United States feel comfortable in our physical security, if not in our vitality as a Jewish community, many of our people in other lands are still subject to the physical and spiritual threats that classical Zionism was supposed to have eliminated. As Zionists, we must continue to be concerned with the fate of our kin in the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, Syria, and wherever they may live in fear and distress.

Beyond our most immediate Zionist concern with survival is the "issue" of Israel's legitimacy — that is, the validity of the concept of a Jewish nation sovereign within its own land. Other countries have experienced a prolonged state of war, but the Arab-Israel conflict has gone beyond mere political considerations and concern with borders and has become a struggle for the legitimacy of a Jewish state.

For many years, Zionists and non-Zionists alike preferred to view U.N. Resolution 3379, equating Zionism with racism, as just another of those meaningless anti-Israel resolutions so often adopted by the United Nations. This may have been a very costly lapse not only for Israel, but for the cause of Zionism in its broadest sense. As a result of the ceaseless propaganda activities of Israel's enemies, anti-Zionism, as expressed in the U.N. resolution, has gained wide currency throughout the world and Zionism is now associated in some people's minds as something negative, where once it had been widely viewed as the most idealistic and humanis-

tic of nationalist movements. Israel today is more isolated than ever before in the world community and is often the object of the most obscene vilification in international forums.

Anti-Zionism has become the “respectable” substitute for classic anti-Semitism, which denied to Jews the right to be equal members of human society. In a grotesque metamorphosis, anti-Zionism would deny the right of the Jewish people to national sovereignty and equality within the society of nations. Accordingly, one of the major unfinished tasks of contemporary Zionism is to achieve universal acceptance of the legitimacy of Jewish statehood, both as an idea and as a reality.

Internally, too, the Zionist vision has been far from fulfilled. Classic Zionism, as noted above, particularly in its Labor Zionist form, wanted to transform traditional social and economic patterns in Jewish life. Thus, the Diaspora Jew who, for so many centuries had been identified with petty commerce, was called upon by the early Zionists to till the soil and return to manual labor. Zionist ideologists praised physical and productive work and the ideology of labor was elevated to a basic philosophy of the reborn Jew rooted in the soil of the homeland. The goal was Jewish economic self-sufficiency, to be achieved through the establishment of a national economy with a varied and all-embracing productive and organizational framework.

But despite its many and often miraculous successes in the economic sphere, Israel is far from achieving economic independence. The ideology of labor, *kibbush ha-avodah* (the conquest of labor), and “productivization” have been superceded by a preponderance of workers in service jobs and public-sector employment. Classical Zionist economic theories have little relevance for today’s world, and major reforms are needed to restore health to Israel’s economy. Zionists in America who are concerned with Israel’s economic well-being must look beyond philanthropy, and should help encourage growth in Israel’s private productive sector through investment, particularly in Israel’s dynamic, expanding and profitable science-based industries.

Basic to Zionist philosophy has been the concern for Jewish identity. Many early Zionist thinkers believed that Jewish national revival required a cultural and spiritual renaissance. A Jewish homeland was sought not only by those escaping anti-Semitism and persecution, but by those who were looking for a place to live a full and creative Jewish life.

From its inception, the Zionist movement was fragmented into opposing viewpoints over the character of Jewish identity and the place of religion in a Jewish state. The overriding need to unite forces in order to attain the most immediate goal of an independent state left the question of the role of religion largely unresolved. Today, the rifts among the various religious streams, as well as between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox on the one hand and the Orthodox and the secular on the other, have not been closed, and even agreement on practical matters of

state policy with respect to religious observance has not brought greater understanding among the rival camps. If anything, the rifts have become wider and the conflict more bitter on such basic issues as "Who is a Jew." The proposal, just this past year, to stamp the identity cards of converts, resulted in explosive reactions and has been compared with procedures followed during the Nazi era. Today, the external threat facing Israel is not much greater than the struggle over the question of religion, which forebodes the destruction of the very purpose of Zionism's chief aim — the creation of a *Jewish* state.

Although, as noted, few of the early Zionists envisaged a Jewish state permanently at war with its neighbors, fewer still (with the notable exception of Ahad ha-Am), considered the probability of a Jewish homeland in which a significant Arab minority would reside. In the first months after the Six Day War, many Israelis assumed that the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank of the Jordan River, with the exception of the eastern sector of Jerusalem, would be returned in exchange for peace. But when it became apparent that the Arab states were not prepared to make peace, some Israelis began to reassert the claim to Judea and Samaria as historically and religiously part of Israel. To them, Hebron and Nablus (Shechem, in Hebrew) were just as much rightfully Israel's as was Tel Aviv. Others believed that, from a strategic viewpoint, Israel's control over the territories was vital to its defense.

At first, because of the uncertainty over the disposition of the territories, many Israelis appeared to ignore the crucial question regarding the status of the one-million-plus Arabs residing in Gaza and the West Bank who, together with the Arab citizens of Israel, would constitute well over a third of the population. That question hits at the heart of Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. Some Israelis, like Meir Kahane, would deny the Arab residents equal rights and civil liberties. At worst, he would expel them. Most Israelis, however, recognize that the state was founded on the basis of democracy and call Kahane's prescriptions simplistic and anti-democratic; others condemn them as racist.

Finally, if we look at three of the supreme Zionist *mizvot* — aliyah, education and learning the Hebrew language — we, as Diaspora Zionists, have much unfinished business. The number of American Jews who receive even a rudimentary Jewish education or who can read, speak or write Hebrew is pitifully small and the number who choose to make aliyah is equally dismal.

If the business of Zionism remains unfinished, one must naturally ask whether the Zionist Movement today is capable of effectively addressing the uncompleted tasks. Once the state of Israel was established, the Zionist Movement, according to its critics, entered a period of decline. This was due, in part, to the views of some of the leaders of the new state, particularly Israel's first Prime Minister and pre-state leader of the Zionist Movement, David Ben Gurion, who believed that the creation

of a sovereign Jewish state obviated the need for a Zionist organization. He felt that the fulfillment of Zionism could be accomplished only through the act of aliyah. These views were opposed by a multitude of Zionists who remained content to live outside of the Jewish homeland for which they had worked so devotedly and they resent intensely being considered "Second Class Zionists." For Zionists abroad, the Jewish State, once established, would serve as the chief instrument in the preservation of Jewish identity and creativity both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

Certain Zionist tasks would obviously devolve upon the new State. However, Zionists in the Diaspora expect to remain full partners in other important Zionist activities. Although there is a difference in opinion as to the extent that Diaspora Zionists should support or criticize Israeli government laws, decisions and actions, the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel remains a firmly committed one.

More recently, Israeli leaders have expressed their appreciation for the growing ties between the American Jewish community and Israel. But, as Chaim Herzog, Israel's current President, stressed in an address to a major American Jewish organization, although

a web of cooperation between us is being woven, I would plead for more than cooperation, for understanding of the special nature of Israel, the destiny it bears, and the inner meaning of its existence beyond all its tangled political, military and economic complexities. (Israel, he stated) is the core, the focus of the Jewish world and, without that focus, I would fear for the Jewish future.

Despite its history of bitter ideological factionalism, the World Zionist Organization had successfully mobilized Jewish support for the establishment of a Jewish state. But the political structure which had served the WZO prior to Jewish independence should have changed with the emergence of statehood. The practical tasks of Zionism left to the WZO after the founding of the State have often been encumbered by an overemphasis on partisan political concerns. Because it is burdened by a structure which many condemn as anachronistic, critics question the ability of the chief instrumentality of the Zionist Movement to carry out the tasks which are still unfinished. To complicate the problem even further, the relationship between the WZO and the Jewish Agency must be more clearly defined since the situation is currently one of transition.

The Zionist Movement, which had been so triumphantly successful in accomplishing the mission that it had set for itself, must reevaluate and reform itself if it is to regain the preeminent position which it once held. Entrenched political interests must put the general welfare of the Zionist Movement above parochial party interests so that all energies can be directed to the important unfinished business of Zionism — the continued building of Israel, the promotion of aliyah, the uplifting of the disadvantaged in Israeli society, the inculcation of Jewish values and Zionist ideals, and the security of Israel and of the Jewish people.



# *Zionism: The Failure of Success*

MITCHELL COHEN

ZIONISM ONCE SOUGHT TO REVOLUTIONIZE the Jewish world; today, apparently, its aim is to manage it.

Consequently, Zionism is — and for a long time has been — at an impasse. This is first and foremost a spiritual impasse, although its organizational manifestations threaten to turn it into a stalemate, a final subversion of Zionist imagination. In principle, the *raison d'être* of Zionism remains as long as the diaspora does. However, in lands where Jews are not persecuted, a *raison d'être* is not sufficient to secure a thriving movement. The successful achievement of independent statehood, which was, of course, the necessary centerpiece of the Jewish national struggle, could not but reorient Zionism fundamentally. However, in so doing, an essential dimension of Zionist creativity was subverted. It is this question — one entirely internal to the Zionist movement — that must be addressed if Zionism is to enter the 21st century worthy of its own heritage. Throughout Zionist history a dialectic constituted by two contradictory wills can be discerned — one to revolution, one to normalization. The young left-wing Zionists who built the foundations of a Jewish state before and after World War I sought to build a revolutionary, “exemplary” society, all the while aspiring to “normalize” the Jewish people — especially its socioeconomic structure. Others spoke simultaneously of being like all other nations and a light unto them.<sup>1</sup> Exhausted by a trying struggle for independence, pressured terribly by war, and preoccupied with the very mechanisms of statehood, Zionism opted, by and large, for normalization after 1948. Its radical impulses were relegated to history, deemed the product of another era, the legacy of another continent. It thereby exorcised a potentially troublesome element in its makeup, and in so doing it relieved a tension — that between revolutionizing and normalizing impulses — that played a particularly fruitful role engendering Zionist creativity and imagination. With Israel's birth, Zionism faced a severe identity crisis because statehood, among other things, aimed at normalization, and normalization was premised on the full ingathering of the

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1. A more recent, and more problematic, manifestation can be seen in the responses of some Israeli leaders — most prominently in the Likud, but in Labor ranks, too — to criticism from abroad. They assume that the uniqueness of Jewish historical suffering ought to entitle Israel to a certain moral-political latitude, but then they decry double standards in foreign pronouncements on their actions.

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exiles, which did not (and, in the foreseeable future, remains unlikely to) occur. Thus, the exorcism of radicalism was part of a process by which Zionism, unable to face this contradiction, sought in the post-1948 era to vanquish all other complications from its diaspora mission.

Truth be told, this was convenient for American Zionism, which existed not only physically but spiritually far from the two continents on which Zionism was, respectively, born and realized. American Zionism never wanted to be particularly revolutionary; it desired to be normal in the United States. So, too, did American Jewry as a whole, which became the major diaspora community following the Nazi slaughter. Both the idea that home was to be found in a Jewish state alone, and the will to the radical reconstruction of Jewish politics, dis comforted American Zionists who rarely saw Zionist analyses as applicable to themselves. These rested, in part, on the deceptive belief that Zionism was solely a rescue mission and that, therefore, the internal life of Zionism ought to be as unpolitical as possible. The product is a contemporary Zionism with little of consequence, let alone with anything fresh, to say to American Jews about the content of their own lives. Hence the inability of Zionist organizations to attract a new generation with long-term, serious Zionist commitments once the initial drama of the struggle for statehood was successfully concluded. Only a movement that takes its own ideas seriously could have done so. *Zionism was, and is, nothing if it is not political.* For its own reasons — primarily that of fund-raising — the Israeli Zionist establishment settled into a similarly comfortable Zionism, though feigning the contrary on occasion. All this may be summarized in a recent minor, though telling, event: Ronald Reagan, the most anti-labor U.S. president in half a century, was named honorary chair of the American Committee commemorating the centenary of the Labor Zionist David Ben-Gurion.<sup>2</sup>

If Zionism has unfinished business today, it is . . . itself.

Zionism was not solely a revolt against the persecutions Jewry suffered in the *golah*. It also embodied a democratic rebellion against the existing structures of Jewish communal authority, structures which Zionists felt had failed their people. This was acutely manifested following 1881 when those authorities — the *shtadlanim* and rabbis — were (at least temporarily) overwhelmed by the traumatic turn of events. Impetus was thereby given to new Jewish political formations and actors by the end of the century, particularly Jewish socialist and Zionist parties. The Russian Zionist, Shmarya Levin, succinctly captured the broader changes occurring within Jewry when he noted in his memoirs that

the people of the book . . . became the people of newspapers. Of old they

2. If it were not such an unhappy commentary on American and Israeli Zionism, it would almost be humorous: Does Reagan think that BG, like the American Founding Fathers, was a Contra? Does this conservative Republican president, upon retiring, plan to move to a commune in the California desert?

were wont to turn everyday to the pages of the Talmud to find out what the sages had to say. Now they turned to the editorial pages.<sup>3</sup>

This represented a democratic thrust within the Jewish community; Zionism, as one form of Jewish nationalism, was an essential aspect and catalyst of it. Zionism was not singular as such, for so, too, was the case with other nationalisms. After all, the essential act of the French Revolution was the refusal of the delegates of the Third Estate, representing some 97% of the French, to remain subordinate to the other two, previously dominant Estates — the clergy and the nobility — who composed but three percent of the population. We can see a comparable historical turn — though not quite as radical — in the challenge to the older forms of Jewish communal authority. The appearance of the World Zionist Congress as a national assembly of an exiled people, the struggle, during World War I, to establish a democratic American Jewish Congress (as a representative assembly of American Jewry), and the attempt to construct a democratic political structure for Palestinian Jews in the form of the *Asefat ha-Nivharim* (Elected Assembly) shortly after the war all indicated something new in the mode of Jewish politics. The *Asefat ha-Nivharim* was superseded by the Knesset, and it is *only there* that we still can speak of a democratic political structure representing a community as a whole. The American Jewish Congress today is not a congress of American Jewry, but an organization pursuing various tasks on behalf of, and within, the U.S. Jewish community.

The World Zionist Organization survives primarily as a bureaucracy bearing little resemblance to a political movement, let alone a democratic one. In recent years there has been much talk, particularly from diaspora fund-raisers, of “depoliticizing” the entire WZO-Jewish Agency apparatus. Ultimately, the mechanism of Israel-Diaspora interchange would become just that — a mechanism. This is rooted in a peculiarly American concept of “efficiency” premised on the illusion that one can preoccupy oneself with questions of means and not ends. The latter is derogated as “ideology.” Ironically, and sadly, those Zionist parties and organizations which still proclaim ideological fidelities strengthen depoliticization trends by failing to engage in actual politics within the WZO, functioning instead as employment bureaux.

At best, depoliticization becomes the victory of a simplistic General Zionism, the type which sought to exclude all “isms” (e.g., socialism) from the Zionist enterprise. Indeed, it is difficult to discern anything significantly “Labor” or “socialist” about those departments in the WZO-Jewish Agency directed by Labor representatives. But this process has been underway for a long time in everything but name, and it is intimately tied to the tradition of wall-to-wall coalition executives running the WZO which, by definition, precludes a substantive “government-opposition”

3. Shmarya Levin, *The Arena* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932), p. 213.

dynamic in Zionist life. The WZO thus becomes a mechanism for patronage without being an arena for a serious world Zionist politics and movement. It is hardly surprising that inefficiency plus make-believe politics should produce discontent among diaspora fund-raisers who are involved in the Jewish Agency.

In 1901, the young Weizmann, then a leader of the “Democratic Faction” challenging Theodor Herzl in the World Zionist Organization, argued that representation to the Zionist Congress ought to reflect differing political perspectives and not merely the imperatives of territorial organization:

We are too afraid of controversies that are supposedly academic, but the clarification of which is in fact an urgent necessity to put an end to many misunderstandings and would be of immense educational value to every Zionist. It is true that clarifying all these issues would separate Zionists into separate camps, but this is precisely what we ought to be demanding. If Zionists with different outlooks exist — and they do — they should be grouped accordingly. This would make the work easier, and many issues that today seem blurred and vague would gain by exact definition and delimitation . . .

Grouping Zionists according to their place of origins makes sense only for the discussion of purely technical and organizational problems, but it is completely absurd when hammering out questions of principle. These have so far been given very little attention, but they must inevitably be brought to the fore if we wish Zionism to gain in depth and not merely to spread out and vanish on the surface like ripples of water.<sup>4</sup>

Though the context was, of course, different, Weizmann’s point remains vital. A 21st century Zionism requires constructive repoliticization, not depoliticization; Zionism must again take its own politics seriously. What would this require? First, that the Zionist Congress truly function as a national assembly of world Jewry. That, in turn, would necessitate an ongoing active political life — with real debate on real issues — within the WZO. Not only would democratic elections among competing slates be imperative before Zionist Congresses, but election campaigns would have to be taken to, and engage, Jewish communities. And democratization would have to be thorough: the tradition of wall-to-wall coalition Executives running Zionist life would have to cease both in Israel and in the diaspora, and a mechanism established for the regular expression of opposition, including votes of no confidence. Let those who win elections govern the WZO and those who lose be their critics. Let the WZO be something other than a tired management apparatus.

My point, ultimately, is this: Zionism, once an insurgent and democratizing force within world Jewry has become its opposite, an entrenched *macheroocracy* composed of the WZO and its appendages, in Israel and in

4. Chaim Weizmann, “On the Functions of the Congress,” *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series B, Papers, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem and New Brunswick, N.J.: Israel Universities Press and Transaction Books, 1983), p. 12.

the *golah*. Through them, Zionism has accepted the principles of communal leadership antecedent to the first Zionist Congress. "Theirs was, even in the best of cases, a class view, characterized by a natural fear of disturbing the status quo or imperilling such privileges as they enjoyed by virtue of their economic standing."<sup>5</sup> Thus Weizmann on the *shtadlanim*. Could something similar not be said of today's Zionist — and, indeed, general Jewish — establishments (with the amendment that economic standing, though still crucial, is not the sole factor)? Contemporary Zionism is primarily concerned with being an Establishment both in Israel and in the U.S. And as the *shtadlanim* against whom Zionists once rebelled cultivated subservience to the powers-that-be, so, too, does today's Zionist leadership in respect to both Israeli and American politics. There isn't even an intellectual opposition with journals such as *Commentary* and *Midstream* suffused by shrill right-wing politics.

A 21st century Zionism will have to be a Zionism beyond Zionism; it will have to embody a new Zionist politics. As much as this writer would prefer it otherwise, optimism does not seem warranted, and not only because the conditions of the late 20th century differ so markedly from those that ignited the original Zionist sparks. Zionism exists in, not outside of, history; the current reality of American Jewry, the overwhelming daily burdens confronting Israelis, together with the self-interest of the Zionist establishments in the U.S. and Israel (as well as of the Federation establishments) all mitigate against the revival of a serious Zionism.

Some sort of "Zionism" will, of course, continue to have a presence even as the Zionist revolution fades. Certainly the Zionist banner will have to be raised aggressively when those political malignancies seeking to delegitimize Israel through anti-Zionism raise theirs. But this will be an act of Zionist self-defense, not of future-oriented creativity. The Zionist organizations will continue to exist and exercise influence, but only as apparatuses. Their self-congratulations will be inversely proportionate to their verve.

The original dialectic constituted by Zionism's will to revolution and its will to normalcy has thus been lost, played out, perhaps irrevocably and certainly to the detriment of a future Zionism. Consequently, Zionism now is ever reflexive and rarely reflective; in the diaspora it functions and, in fact, conceives itself, only as an aftermath. Most of the pressing issues before Israeli society are not Zionist issues at all and parallel those in many other societies (with important exceptions, most prominently the possibility that gradual annexation of the West Bank and Gaza will subvert Israel's democratic, Jewish, character).

Zionism was the most creative collective endeavor of the Jewish people in our times. The Jewish state, whatever its problems, is its monument, and it remains a revolutionary accomplishment, whatever the processes

5. Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 17.

of normalization. There are those who, perhaps, would argue that, like Marx's universal class, the proletariat, which was to abolish itself by ushering in a classless world, Zionism, in creating the Jewish state, was destined to abolish itself. Yet, the *raison d'être* of a serious Zionism remains, at least in principle, as long as the Diaspora does. It is the preconditions of Zionist imagination that no longer seem to exist; if they were reborn, it probably would be in spite of Zionist institutions and the Jewish Agency.<sup>6</sup> If Zionist imagination appears at future Zionist Congresses, it is likely to hover overhead as if Aḥad Ha'am's specter returned from the first Zionist Congress, a solitary mourner at wedding feasts.

An aftermath cannot invent a future; it can only slide into it. Zionism's business is thus likely to remain unfinished in the 21st century, but the Zionist organizations will be so busy that they won't notice.

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6. Support for West Bank settlements and declaring that there are no Palestinians, while seeking to expropriate them, strike me as acts of Zionist self-destruction, not of imagination.

## *Ya'akov & Ra-chel*

ADAM D. FISHER

Ya'akov made a fugitive  
by his mother,  
waits at the well, watches  
as his cousin Ra-chel  
slowly walks her sheep  
in the late-afternoon sun,  
across the rocky hills  
toward him, watches  
her graceful body, fragile,  
fine features,  
lifts up his voice  
with tears of relief.

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V.

## ***Education: For Laity And Leadership***

### ***The Afternoon School***

MORTON SIEGEL

ONE MIGHT BEGIN BY ASKING: WHAT UNFINISHED business? Why must there always be this nagging notion that things are not quite right in the American Jewish community? After all, the number of Jewish communal and national institutions is legion; the growth of the State of Israel and the rallying of Jews to support it and Jewish causes generally, the role of the Jew in American society — all can be cited as factors which reassure as to the educational process. Perhaps the Jewish community of North America is well off and, indeed, there is little “unfinished business” in education.

The answer may be found by applying the measuring rods of success for Judaism generally, and for Jewish education in particular.

How many Jews marry within the faith? How many Jews observe the *mizvot* (whatever the interpretation of *mizvot* may be)? How many Jews are moved, basically and regularly in their daily lives, by their Jewishness? What is the level of *Yediat Sefer*?

These have been, and remain, the important and basic measuring rods — and the results of such “measurement” are known. They are not encouraging.

With these as measuring rods, it is clear that there is more than enough “unfinished business.” What is on the agenda?

The traditional listing (“traditional,” since it is at least three decades old), is not short. It includes much that remains to be done:

1. There is an inadequate supply of properly trained personnel.

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2. The distribution of communal resources (financial and human) does not do justice to education for Jewish juveniles.

3. The failure to motivate elementary school students to continue on the secondary level is well-nigh universal.

4. The uneven characterization of elementary structures — glory to the Day School, and a “supplemental” disavowal of the Afternoon Religious School — denigrates the very structure in which the overwhelming majority of Jewish children are enrolled.

5. The inability to overcome the tension between advocating Hebrew as the language of instruction and proper appreciation of subject matter is endemic. Children continue to be judged by “linguistic facility” or “linguistic competence.”

6. The gap between home and school is now a chasm — elementary Jewish education is basically professionalized rather than home-motivated.

7. The supervisory apparatus of elementary schools is populated primarily by financial supporters and parents — not by those trained in education.

8. Curriculum — with projected goals, graded subject matter and attendant related text materials — is a rarity.

However, these — serious as they are — do not constitute the essential agenda of unfinished business. What is on *that* agenda?

A. To begin with, the need for reemphasis on teaching Judaism is “ethic” rather than “ethnic.” Ethnicity, which stresses identity (“Jewishness is in the blood”) is no substitute for ethnicity which stresses that “Jewishness is in the doing.” Put otherwise, the rehabilitation of elementary Jewish education as a discipline of sense and reason, not primarily sensation and feeling, is essential. Hence — the reemphasis on theology and ideology — *yedah* rather than *regesh*. This is primary unfinished business.

B. Related thereto is the current failure to define Jewishness — not “who is a Jew” but “what is Judaism?” — instead of sloganizing for identity with that which is non-defined. This bespeaks a rehabilitation of “the text” as the major source of instruction in the elementary school — Torah, Siddur and Rabbinic sources.

C. Methodologically, elementary education must move away from “viewing” to “reading-studying.” The penchant to imitate secular educational enterprises which accentuate teaching the child to look at things rather than to read and understand those things requires redress. Put otherwise, children are now being trained to “find answers” rather than to think through answers. The computer, which simulates reason to facilitate finding a solution, with its popularity, has become a basic tool for Jewish education — and prototypes a tendency to teach to response rather than to thought.

D. The curriculum for the elementary school requires focus — on action patterns — the centrality of *mizvah*. The “on-going” is key; spo-

radic moments of exposure ("wasn't that a wonderful model Shabbat"?), presuppose that the random experiential will substitute for the ongoing, persistent, convincing and attendant conditioning of thought processes. Such sporadic experiences have not worked.

E. It is necessary to halt the excess Israelization of the elementary educational process. Jewish elementary education should mediate Jewishness/Judaism as a matter of *how* one lives rather than *where* one lives. Without in any way questioning the self-evident significance of Israel to the Jew, the advocacy of Israel as the cornerstone of Jewishness, rather than recognizing life style as the cornerstone, must be reversed. Israel is to be presented as part of Jewishness, and not, as is done today, Jewishness as part of Israel.

We must confront the attendant plaint that the pressure of American Jewish life, the attractiveness of its "hedonism" and the hypnotic attraction of "being like others" must spell the end for the Jew unless he flees to Israel. To this end we require an education which will furnish a child with a sense of well-being as a Jew in action, rather than in geography.

F. The elementary educational process must also be wrenched away from a time frame which is biologically determined. Bar Mizvah and Jewish education must be repositioned in their relationship to one another. Eliminating the idea that the goal of education is a point of time or a ceremony unrelated to academic achievement, is another imperative.

G. Finally, and not at all paradoxically, elementary Jewish education cannot be viewed in isolation "in the 21st century" anymore than it should have been in the 20th. Elementary education will move forward as the education of adults, especially of parents, is intensified. If there is an overriding item of "unfinished business" it is this — the fragmentation of education into discrete segments by age, rather than recognizing its ongoing nature, throughout the Jew's life span.

# *The Jewish Day School — The Next Half-Century*

ALVIN I. SCHIFF

IT IS ALMOST FIFTY YEARS OLD AND GROWING each year in height and girth, despite early prognostications that it would not survive. While it is shedding some hair, there are no signs of balding or graying, even at the temples. Its appetite increases each year. In the process, it makes more friends. Old friends strengthen their bonds of friendship, and new ones become avid advocates. Some observers, on the other hand, question its ever-growing need for succor, but most often end up supporting it, albeit begrudgingly. Its future depends heavily on its friends.

It is the Jewish Day School — the almost rejected younger offspring that has outpaced its siblings and will probably outlive them.

The American Jewish all-day education experiment of the 1940s has generated a variety of school types and orientations. Several features are common to all of them. These are: autonomous auspices; the provision of general and Jewish education under one roof; an all-day environment offering educational opportunities for the confluence of cognitive and affective learning; a shortage of qualified supervisory, administrative and instructional personnel; and growing fiscal problems due to the rapid escalation in the cost of operation.

The Jewish day school has shown remarkable ability to thrive in the face of continued problems and challenges. While its enrollment is still much less than that of the supplementary school, it has overshadowed the oneday, Sunday and midweek congregational schools in a variety of ways, particularly in its ability to transmit more Jewish knowledge to its students. Moreover, it has attracted significantly more communal attention and support over the last two decades. Although the modern Jewish day school can trace its birth to the beginning of the century, its rapid growth began in 1940. Since then, its enrollment has increased each year.

In 1962, the peak enrollment year in Jewish schooling on the North American continent, about 540,000 children were enrolled in Jewish supplementary schools of all types — mid-week, afternoon, one-day-a-week and Sunday schools. In 1986, there are approximately 240,000 pupils in these institutions — a decline of 55%. On the other hand, during the same

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period, Jewish day school enrollment increased more than two-fold, from 60,000 to 130,000. The day school pupil population now comprises about 30% of the total North American Jewish school enrollment. Moreover, day schools receive a total of \$26 million from local Federations, as compared to \$5.5 million for the supplementary schools.

Initially solely an Orthodox enterprise and centered in New York City, the Jewish all-day school is now ideologically diversified, with 587 school units across the continent. Conservative Judaism, in 1957, via a resolution of the United Synagogue Commission on Education, became seriously involved in supporting and establishing Solomon Schechter schools. Currently, 67 Solomon Schechter schools, 11.4% of the total number of day school units, with about 11,600 pupils, 8.9% of the enrollment, are under Conservative auspices.

The Reform movement, which has traditionally opposed the concept and practice of Jewish all-day education, passed a resolution at the 1986 biennial Union of American Hebrew Congregations conference in support of the development of Reform Jewish day schools. Presently, there are approximately 2600 children, or 2% of the total Jewish day school pupil population, attending 11 Reform all-day schools which, in turn, are 1.8% of the total number of day schools.

By far, the largest proportion of Jewish day schools (472, or 80.5% of the total) and the overwhelming majority of pupils (104,000, or 80% of the enrollment) are under Orthodox auspices.

The above data clearly demonstrates that the Jewish Day School is an ideological institution. However, during recent years, with the encouragement and support of local Federations, particularly in small and intermediate communities which find it difficult, or simply do not want, to support more than one school, communal inter-ideological day schools have been organized. Several of these have been modified from existing ideological institutions. In some cases, it is hard to differentiate between an inter-ideological school and a communal-ideological entity, which is essentially an ideological institution with a communal thrust. There are currently 37 communal all-day institutions (6.3% of the total) with about 11,800 pupils, representing 9.1% of the enrollment.

### *Growth Factors*

The initial spurt in growth in the 1940s and early 1950s was due essentially to three factors: the zealous activity of a small, selfless group of Orthodox day school advocates; the effect of the Holocaust and of the establishment of the State of Israel on the Jewish consciousness of American Jews; and the influx of Eastern European Jews after World War II, especially the arrival of Hungarian Hasidim in 1956-1958. These are no longer causes for increased enrollment.

The reasons for day school growth since 1960 are, interestingly, the

opposite of the factors leading to the decline of the supplementary school. Whereas the birth rate amongst the general Jewish population has decreased in the last several decades, causing a drop in supplementary school enrollment, the birth rate amongst the Orthodox, primarily the ultra-Orthodox, has accounted for dramatic pupil increases.

The mobility of the Jewish population — particularly the *outmigration* of Jews from areas of second and third settlement — has often been accompanied by non-affiliation with a synagogue in the new areas of residence. On the other hand, the *immigration* of Jews from Russia, Iran and from Arab lands, as well as Israelis, has added children to the classroom registers of the day schools.

Counter arguments notwithstanding, intermarriage is a factor in the decline of supplementary school population. However, ethnocentricity — new-found Jewish identity amongst a small segment of Jews — is another reason for the increase in the number of day school pupils.

A growing number of working mothers and single parents favor an all-day school environment, especially on the pre-school levels. Moreover, dissatisfaction with the public school as a result of the change in ethnic composition, the increase in violence and the lowering of standards has motivated some parents to choose a Jewish day school for their children.

Will these factors continue to motivate growth in the decades ahead?

Basically, all practicing Orthodox Jews send their children to day schools. Orthodox schools, primarily the sectarian yeshivot, will continue to increase their enrollments from birth rate. Will the centrist, modern Orthodox day schools that currently recruit children from non-Orthodox backgrounds continue to succeed in their outreach efforts in the light of the new communal and Reform thrusts into all-day Jewish education?

The growing popularity of post-elementary education for girls in the ultra-Orthodox sector has led to significant increases in the Jewish day high school enrollment. What with the current birthrate among Hasidim, the growth of the Jewish day secondary school population is bound to continue.

Solomon Schechter schools have been established in virtually all of the large and intermediate size Jewish communities. Will the Conservative movement be able to found more schools in other communities? Will the Solomon Schechter schools continue to attract more students from Conservative congregational membership? from unaffiliated Jews?

Will the Reform day school take root? Will the individual Reform temples support a national Reform effort to establish day schools? Will they help develop temple-based and intercongregational day schools? Will they motivate pupil enrollment from their member families? Will the Reform day school attract children from non-affiliated Jewish families?

How will the creation of communal schools affect the various ideo-

logical schools? Will they succeed in attracting children from non-affiliated Jewish homes?

As for future enrollment, one other question must be posed. Early childhood education is a significant aspect of overall day school growth. What proportion of the early childhood enrollments will continue on to Jewish all-day elementary school?

### *Communal Support*

Jewish day school education is big business. Annual expenditures reach the almost \$400 million mark. What with the continued increases in enrollment (1 to 3% a year) and escalating costs, it could well be a billion dollar enterprise by the year 2000. Currently, Federations account for 6% of the income Jewish day schools receive. What kind of support will local Federations give to all day education in the future? Where will intensive Jewish education rank among Federation priorities? How will support relate to future campaign efforts?

### *Continuation*

To have a lasting effect, Jewish education must be continuous at least through the high school years and is basic for adolescents in the formation of Jewish identity, attitudes and practices in adult life. The lack of continuation beyond elementary school has a noticeably diminutive effect.

A well publicized study has shown that an afternoon school education through high school can have greater impact upon eventual adult behavior than do 6 or 8 years of day schooling.<sup>1</sup> This study also demonstrates that the best guarantee for a positive school effect is a minimum of 3000 hours of classroom experience — from kindergarten through grade 12.<sup>2</sup> Currently, with the exception of the yeshivot in the New York area, the rate of continuation of elementary day school graduates is minimal. Only about 22,000 pupils (17% of the total Jewish day school enrollment) are enrolled on the high school level. If all elementary Jewish day school graduates continued on to high school this figure would increase by 40 percent.

Will day schools succeed in influencing students (and their parents) to continue on to day high school programs? Will there be day high schools available in small and intermediate communities to make this a reality? To be sure, even in large Jewish communities, some Jewish day

1. Harold S. Himmelfarb, "The Impact of Religious Schooling: The Effects of Jewish Education Upon Adult Religious Involvement," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1974.

2. Geoffrey Boch in his study — "Does Jewish Education Matter," *Jewish Education and Jewish Identity*, New York, American Jewish Committee, 1977, — has indicated that the threshold for Jewish school impact is 1,000 hours.

high schools have not succeeded. During the last decade, in New York, one Conservative high school closed its doors. Another was unable to open even after all plans were completed, including the preparation of a facility. The single day high school in the New York area under Conservative auspices is in a precarious situation. Will congregational leadership be able to develop adequate support for Jewish all-day secondary education under Conservative sponsorship?

### *The School Program*

What about the quality of Jewish all-day schooling? As the day school movement grows, it reflects increasingly the diversity of the Jewish community. The pluralism is expressed in the *intra*-ideological curriculum differences as well as in the *inter*-ideological program variations.

By and large, the ultra-Orthodox yeshivot — whose enrollment comprises about one third of the total day school population — will continue being sectarian, Talmud-oriented, sex-segregated, and non-Zionist. What will be the nature of the programs of the other Orthodox day schools? Will they continue to be affected by the fundamentalist turn to the right in the Orthodox community? What will happen to the Orthodox coeducational schools, given that an increasingly large number of their faculties — particularly in the upper grades — is drawn from the sectarian *metivtot* and *kollelim*?

If the Solomon Schechter schools succeed in attracting significant numbers of children from marginally affiliated families, will this affect the direction of their educational thrust? While the curricula of the various Conservative schools differ? They now have a strong Judaic base of studies of 12-15 hours per week. Will they continue in this vein? What will be the fate of the integration of Jewish and general studies in these schools?

Will the embryonic Reform day school mature into a real bicultural institution with an intensive track of Judaic studies? Will the Reform movement give unqualified support to the development of day schools with strong Jewish Studies components?

What will be the role of Israel in all of the day schools? Will an Israel-based experience become an integral part of the school program?

In considering the responses to these questions, we must be mindful that, as yet, there are no definitive studies on the impact of the modern day school on the adult behavior of graduates. While there are a few research studies like that cited earlier and empirical evidence regarding the post-school Jewish involvement of day school graduates, there is little scientific information available about the quality of the impact of a Jewish all day education on individuals, families and community. The school effect is largely related to home and peer influences. This phenomenon has to be examined carefully when studying the impact of the day school.



As the students in day schools, excluding the ultra Orthodox, are becoming increasingly affected by current societal trends, will they, like the supplementary school, have to move into value content and family education? Does this point to the need for a redefinition of the goals of the day school as we approach the twenty-first century?

An interesting by-product of the day school movement among the Orthodox — especially the ultra-Orthodox — is the emergence of the *kol-lel* phenomenon. It is estimated that there are well over 10,000 young men, eighteen years and over, who spend a significant part of their lives, many to age thirty and beyond, wholly devoted to the study of Talmud. What will be the future of this growing corps of highly committed, young, sectarian Jews with intensive rabbinic background and little or no concomitant cultural baggage? What effect will they have on the Jewish community as they become adults?

### *The Personnel Problem*

The most serious problem of the day school is the shortage of qualified personnel. It will take yeoman efforts on the part of the schools, parents and community to make Jewish day school teaching an attractive career to young, talented westernized Jews, but, without such a cadre, the future of the day school may be cast in doubt.

In order to attract quality educators, the level of compensation and benefits will have to be raised dramatically. Moreover, professional growth opportunities must be made available within each school. With the current range of remuneration from \$8,000 to \$15,000 for part-time teaching, and \$12,000 to \$35,000 (averaging \$18,000) for full-time positions, we cannot hope to attract many new talented people. This challenge belongs primarily in the laps of parents (with full knowledge that some cannot afford greater financial burdens) and the sponsoring institutions. Will their efforts be matched by the local Federations? To what extent?

### *In Sum*

The future provides unlimited opportunity for Jewish all day education. The fledgling, modern yeshivot in the 1940s and early 1950s flourished despite the unwelcome communal environment and vehement opposition from various quarters of the Jewish community. Now, given the universal acceptance of the Jewish day school idea and an appreciation of its role on the American Jewish scene, the potential for its continued growth should be limitless. This essay has raised a variety of questions (read: challenges) that relate to the realization of this potential. It could be within our grasp if we learn to turn problems into promise and forge promise into reality.

# *What Training for Rabbis?*

DAVID LIEBER

IN A MEMORABLE ADDRESS TO THE UNITED Synagogue of America, Solomon Goldman issued a plea that the training of the American rabbi be reexamined in the light of the many demands made on him so that he might not become “the best third-rater in the land.”<sup>1</sup> The year was 1950. New synagogues were springing up everywhere as returning veterans and their families set down their roots in the suburbs and in different parts of the country. Rabbinical schools were under pressure to turn out as many graduates as possible to staff the congregations. In many areas these young men were expected to shape the Jewish life of the community and its institutions. What concerned Goldman was not alone the adequacy of their preparation, but their spiritual depth and personal readiness to accept the awesome responsibility.

Goldman was not the first to voice these concerns. A recent volume on the history of the American rabbinate<sup>2</sup> documents the different efforts that have been made during the past century to train rabbis for the American milieu and the conflicting views of their roles even within the same religious communities. Was the American rabbi to be “the Rav,” the traditional “scholar-saint” well known in eastern Europe, who spent his days in Talmud study and was available to answer halakhic questions, or was he to become a pastor, teacher and preacher, who directed the programs of the synagogue, but was not necessarily present at every morning and afternoon *minyan*? Was he to be an orator who used the pulpit to instruct and inspire his congregation and reach out to the general community, or was he to devote his energies to strengthening the Jewish people and its institutions? Was he to attempt all of these?<sup>3</sup>

The answers that were offered to these questions depended, in part, on ideology and temperament. Even more, they were influenced by the social contexts of the respondents. Clearly, it made a difference whether they were part of a largely immigrant, first-generation, population or were an American born, college educated group. No less important were their attitudes towards the Jewish tradition and the role that it was

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1. “Judaism — Today and Tomorrow,” the key note address at the 1950 biennial convention held in Washington, D.C.

2. J.R. Marcus and A.J. Peck, eds., *The American Rabbinate* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1985).

3. J.E. Carlin and S.H. Mendlovitz, “The American Rabbi: A Specialist Responds to Loss of Authority,” in *The Jews*, M. Sklare, ed. (Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 377-114, where the authors isolate seven different rabbinic models.

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expected to play in their lives. The more acculturated the population, the less the rabbi could appeal to traditional authority. He had to be a "marketing" personality, able to sell himself and his message. He had to speak the language of the people in full knowledge of their pragmatic approach to the synagogue, which had to compete with other institutions in the community for their time and attention. Some might still support it out of filial piety, but, even for them, that no longer sufficed. What they needed was to feel that congregational involvement was "meaningful," that synagogue programs satisfied the needs of their families.

The situation was somewhat different in the Orthodox synagogue, where the authority of the tradition was taken for granted, though here, too, congregants looked to the rabbi not so much for guidance in narrowly ritual matters, but for dealing with the perplexities of the contemporary world. Kashrut supervision, for example, still played a role, as did the selling of *hamez* before Passover, but ever larger groups of younger people expressed an interest in broader issues such as the teachings of Judaism on interpersonal relations, medical ethics, abortion, euthanasia and other matters of concern to the general American public.

The result of these social changes was an altered view of the rabbi and of his role. On the one hand, he was expected to continue to be the traditional scholar-teacher. On the other, he was judged in terms of his pulpit manner and public persona as well as his pastoral skills. More often than not, he was also expected to be at home in school and synagogue administration, as well as an expert group facilitator who could direct the leadership of the synagogue and encourage the active participation of the younger members. Many rabbis simply were not trained for these functions. Some were successful in accepting these additional responsibilities. Even they, however, often found themselves improvising in areas where they had no special knowledge. Others simply felt their holds on their congregations weakening, as younger colleagues had to be brought in to assist them. No wonder that many of them experienced deep frustration in their work, a feeling which a number of them communicated to younger seminarians.

In the meantime, the training of rabbis went on just as it had in the first part of the century. This was reflected in the Liebman study of the three major American rabbinical schools in 1968.<sup>4</sup> The implications of the study were discussed in a symposium in this journal during the following year<sup>5</sup> and further verified in a candid report on the Reform Movement in 1972.<sup>6</sup> With some slight differences in emphasis, seniors in all the schools agreed that they were not being adequately prepared to deal with the realities of congregational life.

4. C.S. Liebman, "The Training of American Rabbis" in AJYB, M. Fine and M. Himmelfarb, eds. (N.Y.: AJC), vol. 69, p. 5.

5. "The Future of Rabbinic Training in America," JUDAISM, vol. 18.

6. T.I. Lenn, *Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism* (N.Y.: C.C.A.R., 1972).

While changes have been introduced into the curricula of the various schools during the last decade, much room for improvement still remains. This is acknowledged by the various faculties who are constantly looking for ways to make their programs more effective. It is underlined by recent graduates who frequently find themselves as harassed as their older colleagues. Their tasks would be much easier, they argue, if they had been better prepared for them, if only their studies had been more focused on the day to day responsibilities of the congregational rabbi.

In fairness, that is easier said than done. The drastic changes that have taken place in the Jewish world have made earlier models of rabbinic training grossly inadequate.<sup>7</sup> The voluntary character of religious affiliation in the United States, the breakdown of the traditional base of authority, radical changes in social and cultural patterns — all have fundamentally altered the nature of the Jewish community and its religious institutions.<sup>8</sup> The study of the classical texts alone, then, no matter how profound or hallowed, is not sufficient to prepare a person for religious leadership in our age. That is why both the Eastern European *yeshivah* and the western graduate school, after which our modern seminaries modeled themselves, are not adequate.

There is also the problem of the deficient backgrounds of the men and women who present themselves for rabbinic training. Some are literally beginners, without any knowledge of the Hebrew language or, consequently, of even the most elementary classical texts. Surprisingly, even those with *yeshivah* backgrounds are not fully at home in rabbinic texts, let alone in the Bible or other Jewish literature to which very little time has been devoted in their schooling. Many have only the barest acquaintance with the philosophy and culture of the western world and have almost no experience in analytic thinking and the critical reading of texts. Add to this the absence of sophisticated writing and public speaking and we begin to understand the dilemmas faced by those designing the rabbinical school curricula.

But a way must be found! While Liebman may be exaggerating when he writes that the rabbi is "the most important figure in American Jewish life today,"<sup>9</sup> it is a fact that no significant Jewish survival in America is conceivable without rabbinic leadership, for the rabbi is the preeminent mediator of the Jewish ethos. This is true not only of the congregational rabbi, but of those who serve other institutions, either as scholars or teachers, administrators or group workers. As long as they retain the title "rabbi," people look to them as authentic representatives of the Jewish tradition, of its spiritual and moral heritage. Regrettably, non-Orthodox rabbis are generally not viewed this way by members of the community.

7. L. Olan, "The Rabbi in a Secular World," *The Reconstructionist* (July 4, 1969).

8. This is a problem that affects other religious groups in America as well. Cf. J.M. Gustafson, "The Clergy in the United States," *Daedalus* (vol. 92, 1963): 724-44.

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

But, at least in America, no serious observer can question that rabbis have been among the animating spirits of the Jewish community and a principal source of its self-renewal. That is why so much is at stake in their training and every effort has to be made to upgrade it.

Before we turn to a proposal designed to do so, it may be helpful to project the kind of rabbi that we believe will be effective in contemporary America. First, he<sup>10</sup> must have a clear understanding of his goals and how they relate to his mission as a Jewish religious teacher. Otherwise, he cannot possibly exercise the leadership role which people expect of him. This requires, among other things, a profound knowledge of the Jewish religious classics, a grasp of the dynamics of contemporary Jewish life and an understanding of the human condition. He must also have managerial skills to handle the day-to-day affairs of the congregation. Furthermore, he must possess both the wisdom and the skill to translate the ancient texts into terms which will illuminate the existential realities of his people and of the world in which they live. Otherwise, he cannot claim to be speaking out of the tradition, which is, after all, the source of his authority. Nor can he restrict himself to what are perceived to be exclusive Jewish concerns. As the public representative of a religion in which justice and compassion are central, he must not ignore the claims of those who are in need or whose rights have been ignored. At the same time, he has to embody the highest values of Judaism and its practices in his own life. Otherwise he cannot be taken seriously as its exponent. People have a right to expect that one who calls himself "rabbi" lead a life shaped by deeply spiritual and moral purposes, a love of Torah and humankind.

If that is the case, it is reasonable to ask whether any school can produce such a person. We generally do not associate spirituality and moral character with course requirements and examinations. Yet, as everyone knows, colleges and universities do have a transformative effect on their students even when they are not consciously designed to do so. True, the students have to have some sense of "calling," a passionate desire to serve. They also need some talent. Given these elements, it should be possible for a rabbinical school to provide the ambiance, the education, and the training required to shape them into reasonably good spiritual leaders. As in every field, only a handful of "giants" will emerge, but most graduates will be sufficiently prepared to serve their people with competence and a sense of achievement.

We indicated, previously, that the earlier models for rabbinical training are inappropriate today. Another one comes to mind which may prove to be more helpful: the medical school. It, too, has to impart vast amounts of knowledge and help the students translate it into practical application. It, too, prepares them for a career which is extremely

10. Now that women are being ordained, the pronoun "he" is intended to refer to them as well as is "him" or "his." The masculine form is used because we lack a third person singular pronoun which refers to both sexes.

demanding and borders on a calling. It also requires virtually total commitment in terms of time and focused energy, which we believe essential for rabbinic training as well. Briefly, while a basic knowledge of the sciences is required for admission, medical students generally spend the first two years on the sciences related to the physiology of the human body. During the next two years they receive clinical training in a hospital under careful supervision. Following graduation, there is at least an additional year in internship, and up to seven or even eight more years in specialization. The program is extraordinarily difficult and very costly. But it does produce men and women physicians to whom one can entrust one's life, not only by virtue of their knowledge and skills but because they have been socialized into their roles. That is, they act and think like physicians twenty-four hours a day. That is why they can respond so rapidly and calmly in the extremest emergencies.

Rabbis need a comparable kind of training, since they are expected to be at home in vast areas of learning and master a variety of skills. Five or six years of post-graduate training are also required, as is some undergraduate preparation. Accordingly, every effort should be made to seek out young people at earlier stages in their development — ideally in their junior and senior years in high school — to offer them guidance in their college studies. During the college years, individualized textual tutorials should be made available to them if they are not otherwise offered on their campus, but not at the expense of a broad training in the general humanities. Consideration should also be given to bringing them together as a group with master teachers on an annual basis, for periods of one or two weeks, for personal reinforcement and the enhancement of their analytic skills. The program should be open to college students at any stage in their schooling with the understanding that they will have to make up deficiencies before they may matriculate officially in the graduate program of the rabbinical school.

The first three years of actual rabbinic training should consist of an MA program. It should be rigorous in its academic requirements, with courses and seminars for the first two years in Hebrew language, classical Jewish texts, Jewish history and thought, Jewish literature and contemporary Jewish life. At the end of the second year, students should be required to take comprehensive examinations in Hebrew, Bible, Talmud and any one other area of their choice prior to working on a Master's thesis during the third year. Since the program will be very demanding, students will have to devote virtually all of their time to it. To make this possible, they should be offered tuition-free scholarships as well as stipends to cover their living expenses. These might come in the form of loans either from the Federations or from national synagogue bodies, with the understanding that ten percent of the loan would be forgiven for each year that the student serves as a full time rabbi. Since we are not dealing with thousands of people, it would not be a huge sum, but it would be a significant



investment in raising the educational level of the spiritual leaders of the community.

Upon the satisfactory completion of the thesis, students would be awarded the MA degree. At this point they should be asked to submit a brief paper outlining their theological views, the purpose being to encourage them to begin to think in a critical manner about their personal religious philosophy. To encourage openness, these papers should not be graded, nor should they prevent any one from going on with his studies, but they should be reviewed on an individual basis to point to any inconsistencies or gaps in the thinking. The student should then be encouraged to devote time to reading and thinking in this area in preparation for a final, more comprehensive paper of this kind, which should be submitted prior to ordination.

The three years following the MA should include formal classes as well as supervised on-the-job training, for which students should be paid. The amount ought to be enough to take care of part of their living expenses, but they will still need a tuition-free scholarship or a loan to take care of their formal studies. The latter would include the classical Jewish texts with the focus on their "translation" homiletically into contemporary terms. Students would be taught to interpret and reinterpret biblical and rabbinic materials so as to make them speak with immediacy to the men and women in the synagogue. Additionally, stress would be placed on honing communication skills — writing, speaking, listening, teaching and preaching. Attention would also be given to management areas, such as administration, public relations and organization. While the normal synagogue skills will have been acquired by then, students should be encouraged to compose their own personal devotional materials to give them a better understanding of the prayer experience. Similarly, they should be taught to compose responsa, to gain a better appreciation of the work of the halakhist and his contribution to maintaining the integrity of Jewish law and ethics. Included should be not only ritual questions, but those which come under the broad heading of "moral theology," an area which only recently has begun to gain the attention that it deserves. Time should be provided for the acquisition of pastoral skills as well as an acquaintance with the way that the central agencies of the Jewish community function. Nor should we overlook the Israel experience which could best be acquired through spending time there in an organized program.

Paid internships should occupy half of the students' time during each of these last three years. The first year should be devoted to Jewish education, both formal and informal. The second year to management — school and synagogue administration or working in a community agency. During the third and last year, the students should serve as assistant rabbis, engaging especially in preaching, teaching and pastoral activity.

To maximize the learning experience in the internship programs, rabbinical schools will have to employ specialists in these areas to place



and supervise the students who will be required to submit regular written reports evaluating their experiences and exhibiting an understanding of their significance. During the year prior to ordination, one final comprehensive report should be drawn up reviewing each student's spiritual odyssey from the fourth year on. It should exhibit an acquaintance with the issues that have exercised Jewish thinkers throughout the centuries and indicate how the student has resolved them, if only tentatively, for himself. It should show an understanding of some of the contemporary Jewish religious positions which may differ from his, and present a reasoned defense for his own choices. It should be well organized, coherent and sufficiently thoughtful to qualify as partially fulfilling the requirements for a DHL degree.<sup>11</sup>

Such a program will add to the costs of rabbinic training. Not only will substantial scholarships be required by the students, as well as stipends to cover their minimal living expenses, but schools will have to expand their faculties to include three types of people — graduate research scholars, homileticsians who will also serve as role models for students, and experts in various skills who will train and supervise interns and be available to help the men and women already in the field. All three groups will have to be selected also for their contribution to the ambience of the schools. These, then, comprise religious communities serving as models for students as they lead their own congregations. If the community proves to be warm and spiritually uplifting, the student will remain close to it even after his ordination and continue to relate to it. With the ties between them remaining close, a fruitful interchange between the academy and the larger synagogue community will be ongoing, to the great benefit of both.

Almost a quarter of a century ago,<sup>12</sup> Simon Greenberg, who has devoted a lifetime to the training of rabbis, observed: "despite all of the shortcomings of the Rabbinate, it alone stands today like Aaron (*beyn ha-hayyim u-ven ha-metim*), between the hope for a possible renaissance for Judaism in America and the certainty of its deterioration and collapse as a significant moral force in the life of our people." Much has changed in American Jewish life since then, but the role of the rabbi remains central. It is time that the entire community publicly recognize this fact and invest more effort and money in the training of its future rabbinic leadership. Whatever shape American Jewry will take during the next century, it will almost certainly be influenced by the quality of its rabbis and the wisdom that they will bring to their tasks.

11. Since the DHL, unlike the Ph.D., is not considered evidence that the student has made "an original contribution" to a field of research, it may be appropriately awarded to indicate that the student has acquired both the knowledge and skills to serve as a rabbi. It would then be analogous to the EdD awarded to students going into educational administration or another one of the practical arts connected with education.

12. "Dissatisfied but Not Unhappy," unpublished address, 1962.

VI.

## ***Jewish Literature and Journalism***

### ***Jewish Culture: Unfinished Business***

SANFORD PINSKER

"And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end."

— Ecclesiastes

LET ME BEGIN WITH A FEW WORDS OF EXPLANATION, even of apology, about my title. First, it is not, strictly speaking, my own, but, rather, one suggested by the editors of JUDAISM. For longer than I would care to admit, the words — taken individually, taken in pairs, taken as a whole — started back at me from their letter inviting me to participate in the symposium.

Whatever quarrels I might have with the alliterative packaging that pits "prospects" against "perils," the deeper truth is that Jewish attitudes have a way of dividing themselves between psalm and lamentation, between celebration and skepticism, between conjecture about an uncertain future and reflections about the abiding past. It would be easy — perhaps a bit *too* easy — to point out that the making of books, for example, has always been an "unfinished business." Rather than a *Simhat Torah*, a completed book is followed by reviews, by critical commentary, by divisions of approval and dissent — and, in the writer's mind, by plans for yet another book.

In this sense, one could argue that culture fails to make "progress" in the usual ways in which people define the term. Rather than Art, say, becoming better and better, it simply becomes "different," exploring new

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avenues when older ones seem saturated or used-up or exhausted. Meditating about American Jewish fiction, Irving Howe once claimed that

American Jewish fiction has probably moved past its high point. Insofar as this body of writing draws heavily from the immigrant experience, it must suffer a depletion of resources, a thinning-out of materials and memories . . . The sense of an overpowering subject, the sense that this subject imposes itself upon their imaginations — this grows weaker, necessarily, with the passing of years.

— from the “Introduction” to *Jewish-American Stories*.

What Howe says about American Jewish literature can be extended, of course, to the whole of the American-Jewish experience. For if ours is, as he implies, an immigrant culture, both nourished and energized by discontinuity on the one hand and by assimilation on the other, then it is fair to say that that *Zeitgeist* no longer operates except in the most self-conscious of ways and, moreover, that one can hardly imagine it operating at all in the next century.

Small wonder that a generation of younger writers and critics has resisted such bleak prophecies. How could they not? It is as natural for those who have not yet made their mark to insist that the full story has yet to be told as it is for those who gave shape and meaning to their own experiences to feel that History will end when they do. Fortunately, Jewish-American culture is large enough, elastic enough, to accommodate both positions and, perhaps just as fortunately, Jewish boosterism has a way of being tempered by healthy doses of Jewish skepticism.

In this respect, my generation occupies what can only be called an uneasy “middle space,” caught between the lingering presence of voices that we “met” as part of our required reading in college or in graduate school and those newer voices which are urging us to carve our Jewish consciousnesses from authentically Jewish sources. Curiously enough, both groups agree that nothing of lasting cultural value has occurred lately, although the latter group might go on to define “lately” as since the destruction of the Temple.

To be sure, those inclined to be professional mourners can always wring their hands about “culture.” I have been urged to attend so many graveside services in the last few years — for the novel, for the short story, for fiction itself — that I would have worn out several dark suits had I attended them all. Still, the making of books persists and, no less surprising, even the most uncompromising of the nay-sayers finds the time to read through the best of them.

The bald fact is that Jews are crazy for culture. This was true in the days when immigrant workers sat on uncomfortable, hardbacked chairs to hear a lecture on (of all things) “The History of Ancient Greece” or the ubiquitous Benjamin Feigenbaum speak on “The Essence of Free Thought;” and it remains true in synagogues and Jewish community cen-

ters today. The point is less that many of the “lectures” sailed over weary, immigrant heads or even that many self-styled Yiddish lecturers were longer on histrionics than they were on substance, but, rather, that an indelible pattern had been established. Granted, the specifics alter — at the present moment, for example, I’m told that Dr. Ruth Westheimer is one of this season’s hotter tickets — but the original impulse remains. It would easy enough to point to, say, the distinguished series of lectures that Elie Wiesel gives at New York’s 92nd Street YMHA and then to brand all such duplications west of the Hudson as inauthentic, as counterfeit, as so much *schund*, but that would be rather like saying that our grandfathers wasted their time hanging around the Educational Alliance Building.

Because Jews care about culture, they are willing — sometimes even anxious — to quarrel about it. How else to explain the flight of an entire group of New York intellectuals from their respective Brooklyn *yeshivot* to the reading room of the Fifth Avenue Public Library? If they left the Talmud itself behind, they affixed their Talmudic energies to a wide variety of texts — by Marx, by Freud, by Joyce, by Melville. And what had been biblical “commentary” became *Commentary*, became *Partisan Review*, became *Dissent*.

A young black novelist once told me that he would give anything to be in Philip Roth’s predicament — that is, harangued by the official defenders of the Jewish community, tsk!-tsked by outraged elders, made to suffer the slings-and-arrows of “bad press” — because, of course, that would mean that people in the black community had read his books. The sad fact, he insisted, is that the black community does not buy books, and that it does not care about what its writers, its intellectuals, say. Mr. Roth, who has turned his attention of late to exploring the vexations of being Rich and Famous, might not agree, but I suspect that even *he* prefers angry readers to imaginary ones.

At the same time, however, one wonders how many case studies in *Portnoy’s Complaint* we are destined to hear about in the next decades. Or, for that matter, how often we will be asked to recall those thrilling days of yesteryear when budding intellectuals had Big Visions and empty pockets. I say this knowing full well how sobering the charge of a “thin personal culture” can be. When Irving Howe levelled the charge at Philip Roth (in a stinging piece entitled “Philip Roth Reconsidered”), he struck out at more than a wiseacre from Newark. As he put it, taking the highest possible road:

One reason Roth’s stories are unsatisfactory is that they come out of a thin personal culture. That he can quote Yeats and Rilke is hardly to the point. When we speak of a writer’s personal culture we have in mind the ways in which a tradition, if absorbed into his work, can both release and control his creative energies. A vital culture can yield a writer those details of manners, customs, and morals which give the illusion of reality to his work.

More important, *a vital culture talks back, so to say, within the writer's work*, holding in check his eccentricities, notions, and egocentrisms, providing a dialectic between what he has received and what he has willed — one can see this in novelists as various as Tolstoy, Hawthorne, Verga, and Sholem Aleichem.

In such company, Roth is, indeed, out of place. But so, too, are nearly any other American novelists one might care to name, with the possible exception of Saul Bellow. More important, though, is what Howe's remarks have to say about the future of Jewish-American culture and what its "unfinished business" might consist of. Despite the enthusiastic, often impressive efforts of urban Jewish professionals who think more about learning synagogue skills than about the BMW in the showroom window; despite genuine concerns about the plight of Soviet Jewry and bracing identifications with Israel, this is a culture being "learned" rather than felt naturally in one's bones. Such people may comprise a readership (and for that fact we are fortunate), but they are not likely to be its shapers.

Even those writers most often cited as breaking new ground — Cynthia Ozick, Arthur Cohen, Hugh Nissenson, Mark Halpern, Norma Rosen, Johanna Kaplan, to name a half-dozen — have yet to make a significant mark outside of the Academy. To be sure, relatively new magazines like *Moment* or *Proof-Texts*, *Response* or *Shirim*, are encouraging signs, as is everything from *klezmore* bands to the *The Jewish Catalogue*, but the sterner juries of culture are still out.

Much as we would like to see the "problem" — and the possibilities — of Jewish culture as an isolated concern, the fact is that we share many of the conditions that bedevil the general ethos. Slice it as you will, American culture is going through a bad patch. Nearly everything seems diminished — literature, music, the arts — when compared with the giants of the twenties or thirties. Put another way: whatever post-Modernism is, it ain't Modernism. Labels of blame can, and have, been stuck everywhere — on the universities that co-opted Modernism's vitality and turned it into a three-credit course; on what Christopher Lasch calls "the culture of narcissism"; on hippies or yuppies or the pundits who coin such terms; on television. No doubt our age reflects all of these and none of these. In fact, it may well be that a century begins in creative excitement and ends in exhaustion. In any event, our age seems at least as old as the one that a very young T.S. Eliot tried to describe in "Gerontion." The rub, of course, is that even *that* poem has been domesticated by its critics.

And, yet, some things are clear. All of us, Jew and gentile alike, are just beginning to awaken from the nightmares of our century. We live in what Elie Wiesel has called a Post-Holocaust world, with all of its terrifying implications and moral imperatives. In such a context, the very question of what is, or is not, authentically "Jewish culture" takes on a radically new complexion. Does Art, necessarily, trivialize a shivery event like the Holocaust? Is our painful silence a more appropriate gesture, even though "silence" is precisely what the Nazis most counted upon when they

launched their Final Solution? At the moment, there are survivors among us and the sheer work of documenting their experiences, of collecting their memoirs, of establishing the *facts* with scrupulous precision forestalls the nagging question of what we will do in the next century, when no survivors remain. Will novel and story, poem and prayer, have a role to play *then* that we cannot, perhaps must not, imagine now?

And what about Israel? If Jewish-American writers have been reluctant, for understandable reasons, to write about a Holocaust that they did not experience, does roughly the same formula apply to Israel? Will our best writers continue to feel that Israel is not their country, that they are "American" writers, sons of Hawthorne and Melville, Twain and James, or that, at best, Israel warrants our uncritical support, rather than our complex, imaginative visions.

My hunch is that, for all the talk about a writer's "tradition" or about his thin vs. felt culture, subjects choose a writer, rather than the other way around. By that I mean that authors write what they *have* to write, not what they might "like" to write, and certainly never what they are admonished to write. For a critic to imagine otherwise is *huzpah* rather than *hubris*, a mug's game rather than a literary exercise. In short, tails do not wag dogs, however much the critic's "tale" might insist otherwise.

There was a time when the entire question of "Jewish culture" revolved around the issue of assimilation. As Jews moved — slowly, very slowly — into the cultural mainstream, many felt that only a cockeyed optimist could predict anything less than a disaster. On more strictly cultural fronts, valued commodities like alienation virtually depended on being an outsider. This "edge" gone, how would Jewish-American writers differ from their *goyische* counterparts? Some, of course, insisted that a day never passed without their being painfully aware of a Jewish "difference." Most, however, found it easy to strike a bargain with America and with American culture.

In large measure, my generation inherited the benefits of accommodation without much first-hand knowledge of the pains. For better or worse, we wear our Jewishness proudly, but lightly. For most of us, it is the center of our lives only if we choose it to be so. Indeed, *choice* is our word, as "rebellion" was for those who felt themselves bound hand-and-foot by an oppressive Orthodoxy. This will, no doubt, make for important differences when hindsight writes *our* chronicle. Granted, it is hard for me to imagine such a saga without a certain nearly indefinable irony. But it is also impossible for me to imagine, no matter how the always "unfinished business" of Jewish culture turns out in my lifetime, that the story will be either uninteresting or unimportant.

# *The Jewish Press — Chronicle of the Contemporary Scene*

JEROME WM. LIPPMAN

AS WE APPROACH THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, the American Jewish community may call itself fortunate to live at a time and in a country in which Jewish life is flourishing. We have witnessed a revival of interest in Jewish observance and ritual, and all the denominations of Judaism have established networks of Hebrew schools, day schools or yeshivot. On college campuses, Jewish studies programs abound. The Zionist community supports a wide range of educational, social service, and political organizations in Israel. The 40 major American Jewish organizations attest to the richness and diversity of American Jewish interests and priorities. And we have created a fundraising mechanism unsurpassed by any other group in the nation. For those who choose to participate in organized Jewish life, a well-developed infrastructure is firmly in place.

American Jews are also well-integrated into the general community, where we have reached the highest levels of achievement professionally, educationally, culturally and politically.

Given the development of the Jewish community and the sophistication of its members, we would naturally hold the highest expectations for its press. And, indeed, we find that Jewish publications are proliferating in this country. There are almost 100 local weekly and biweekly newspapers, including a handful of Yiddish language papers, as well as over a dozen monthly and quarterly magazines and a number of scholarly journals focusing on Jewish issues.

Many of the magazines — such as *Hadassah Magazine*, *B'nai B'rith International Jewish Monthly*, *The Jewish Frontier*, *Midstream* and *Congress Monthly* — are sponsored by Jewish organizations whose members they are designed to serve though their contents go beyond the limits of house organs. A few, though published under the auspices of organizations, are editorially independent and cover a wide range of topics and perspectives in Jewish life. *Commentary* and *Present Tense*, both published by the American Jewish Committee, and *JUDAISM*, published by the American Jewish Congress, belong to this category. The major religious movements also publish rabbinical journals of high quality and there is a small number of

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privately published magazines, like *The Jewish Spectator*, *Shma*, and *Moment*.

These magazines, as well as scholarly journals like *Jewish Quarterly Review* and *Prooftexts*, both reflect and contribute significantly to the American Jewish intellectual, cultural and religious experience. Yet the circulation of many of these publications — and, therefore, their impact on the general Jewish community — is still quite limited.

For the vast majority of readers of Jewish media, the local Jewish weekly or biweekly is their primary source of Jewish news, and here the Jewish press falls somewhat short of the expectations held for it. An examination of Jewish newspapers across the country reveals that the Jewish press, for the most part, — and there are some worthy exceptions — is filled with canned releases, wire service reports, and the ubiquitous “grip and grin” photos. Absent from most papers is any discussion of the controversial issues facing the local and wider Jewish communities. Penetrating coverage and cogent editorial analyses of the religious, Zionist, philanthropic and political issues with which the community is daily grappling are rarely to be found. In short, the very elements which define a newspaper — comprehensive reporting of issues and events and a variety of perspectives on the impact of those events — are not to be found in most Jewish media.

This is not the legacy which the publishers and editors of the early American Jewish press, most of it written in Yiddish, intended to leave for the maturing American Jewish community.

How did this development come about? Two primary factors have contributed to the current low state of much of Jewish journalism: economics and the involvement of local Jewish federations in the Jewish newspaper field.

As American Jews became more educated and assimilated, the role of the Jewish press — once the primary source of news of world Jewry, as well as of domestic social and political issues — was greatly reduced. The Yiddish press all but disappeared from Jewish life, and weekly newspapers serving Jewish communities throughout the country struggled for economic survival.

In many instances, the local federation of Jewish philanthropies, no doubt with good intentions, took over publication of the beleaguered local private weekly or established its own paper to assure that the Jewish community was provided with sufficient information about Israel and Jewish communal activities to encourage contributions to the local fundraising drive.

However, for the sake of greatly enhancing their public relations and strengthening their own fundraising campaigns, federations were willing to sacrifice the essence of any newspaper: the ability of the publication seriously to examine issues, to question policies and, when appropriate, to

criticize the leadership of the community which that paper purports to cover.

Also, by guaranteeing a built-in circulation to its contributors, the federation robbed the papers of any motivation to maintain a high quality product. It was no longer necessary for the publication to prove itself and sell itself: Contribute \$25 to the local federation, and you receive the paper, whether you want it or not. The editors became federation employees whose primary responsibility was not to the reader, but to an editorial board composed of lay people and professionals representing federation's interest.

This formula did nothing to improve Jewish journalism, but federations assert that the papers which they sponsored have helped in their fundraising efforts.

On the assumption that the federation-controlled paper does reinforce fundraising, more and more local federations have adopted the idea of turning the local Jewish newspaper into a campaign vehicle. In many cases where an independent Jewish newspaper already exists — Los Angeles is the most recent example — the federation simply has decided to publish its own house organ, which means using the federation treasury — community funds — to compete directly for advertising and circulation with the usually struggling independent publisher.

In other instances, to avoid the charge of directly diverting charitable funds to a "house organ" in competition with independent papers, wealthy contributors to the local campaign have lent money to, or invested in, "quasi-independent" papers whose editorial boards are comprised of UJA-federation leaders and with whom the federations have a prior agreement to purchase subscriptions for all of their contributors. Such arrangements can be found, for example, in New York and Bergen County, N.J.

Whether in the format of house organs or federation-affiliated "quasi-independent" publications, these papers take advantage of relatively unlimited funds, mail under non-profit postal rates, save rent by using space and equipment in UJA-federation offices, describe UJA-federation contributor lists as "subscribers" and aggressively pursue local retail advertising.

These actions have further jeopardized independent Jewish media, lowered the quality of Jewish journalism and — most alarming — reduced the readers' expectations of what a Jewish newspaper should contain.

There is a difference between fundraising and publishing. One serves UJA-federation — a worthy cause, to be sure. The other serves the public and the public's right to know. No newspaper can maintain its integrity and independence while promoting the activities and priorities of one specific organization.

For much of the latter part of this century, economic factors and fed-

eration attempts to control information going into Jewish homes have resulted in a blurring of the distinction between raising funds and disseminating news and perspectives. As a result, the Jewish community has suffered an immeasurable loss of high quality, independent reporting on vital Jewish issues in its own newspapers.

Yet, despite the current state of affairs, there are many reasons to believe that the American Jewish community may be better served by its press as we look toward the next century.

In recent years, we have witnessed a turn-around in Jewish newspapers in places like Baltimore, Washington, Denver, Long Island and Palm Beach. In some cases, young professional newsmen and women have entered the field of Jewish journalism, bringing with them skills and standards that are on a par with the best in secular journalism. At the same time, community leaders, including federation leaders who have grown disenchanted with the quality and role of the federation-subsidized Jewish press, have invested time and money in independent papers to serve their communities.

Original reporting by staff writers, covering stories ranging from local political and social issues to interdenominational conflicts to disagreements over American and Israeli foreign policy, is on the increase. It now complements and, in some instances, replaces, UJA-federation campaign news and wire service reports from New York and Israel. These stories have opened Jewish readers to the possibility that their Jewish newspapers can be enterprising, challenging and well-written.

The first mini-Jewish newspaper chains are also appearing on the scene. The publisher and editor of the *Baltimore Jewish Times* are now publishing the *Detroit Jewish News*. The *Southern Israelite* of Atlanta was recently purchased by the owner of the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*. These mini-mergers mean a sharing of articles, staff and resources that may well enhance the quality of the newspapers involved.

Another cooperative effort in Jewish journalism was recently launched by four independent Jewish papers in Washington, D.C., Palm Beach, Fla., Bergen County, N.J., and Long Island. The group has formalized the sharing of articles made possible by the advent of computer technology and telecommunications in the small newspaper industry. The papers share staff writers, coordinate the assignment and editing of articles, and jointly undertake lengthier investigative and feature pieces on a variety of political, social, religious and cultural issues of concern to their readers. The intent of the arrangement, which allows for optimum use of each paper's resources and eliminates duplication of reporting and editing, is to raise the quality and scope of journalism in each of the participating publications.

In addition, as noted above, the computerization of weekly newspapers allows Jewish publications across the country to exchange articles in minutes via telecommunications, facilitating the wider dissemination of

higher quality news and feature articles while conserving costs and manpower.

(Ironically, in response to this new vitality in independent newspapers, some federations have begun to put even more money into beefing up their own house organs, making them better looking and adding more feature and opinion columns — subject, of course, to editorial board consensus and space limitations imposed by required coverage of campaign functions.)

And, finally, Judaica departments in universities are more receptive to the idea of training young journalists for the field of Jewish journalism, giving them the substantive background which they need to complement their journalism skills and working with Jewish newspapers to develop meaningful internship experiences.

The year 2000 is a millennial year. We are not likely to reach the Millennium that is defined as “a hoped-for period of joy, serenity, prosperity and justice” — not in Jewish journalism, anyway. But if we demand and support excellence in our Jewish newspapers, we will be a little closer to the goal. That justifies the efforts of all those concerned with the health, security and dignity of the Jewish community.

## *The Yeshiva Couple's Wedding*

JACK E. FRIEDMAN

Casting off the scholar's solemn air,  
The sober face of reasoned disputation,  
The black-froked students dance an incantation  
Of frenzied joy around the gentle pair.

With arms entwined the scholars embrace  
The blissful couple in a ring of feeling  
And weave for the bride a fleecy wreathing  
Of trailing tassels for a sign of grace.

Should you seek a clue to the singular sight  
Enchanting the bride at the marriage rite,

Then know that beneath the text-fed pallor  
A lover holds sway with the exegete  
Who weekly courts a lady of valor.

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# *“Jerusalem, the Joy of the Whole Earth”*

ABRAHAM E. MILLGRAM

FROM ANCIENT TIMES, JERUSALEM HAS BEEN a magnet which drew to itself many of the peerless and the precious of mankind as well as many of the world's cranks and freaks. It attracted hermits and mystics, kabbalists and those who merely sought burial in Jerusalem's holy soil. The city has also attracted fanatics and eccentrics of various degrees of mental derangement, especially men and women who thought themselves to be the reincarnation of prophets, priests, messiahs, and kings. More important has been Jerusalem's attraction for a multitude of ordinary pilgrims and tourists for whom the city's monuments and shrines are invested with sanctity and charm. The pilgrims came with a deep reverence for “the city of our God . . . the city of the great King”; the tourists came with a keen desire to see the city that is “fair in situation, the joy of the whole earth” (Ps. 48:2-3).

Until not very long ago, the Old City was the only Jerusalem that existed. Surrounding it there were only bare, rocky hills. When the nineteenth century visitor arrived in Jerusalem, he usually entered from the east and immediately caught sight of the city's towers and pinnacles. Standing on the Mount of Olives early in the morning, he saw the golden dome of the Mosque of Omar, or, more correctly, the Dome of the Rock, and the silver dome of the El Aksa Mosque shining in the sunlight. Behind these he saw the Old City with its many cupolas, minarets, and steeples. Standing out among these contours of Jerusalem, he saw the large domes of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and, prior to the war of 1948-1949, the prominent domes of the Hurvah and the Nissan Bak synagogues. Framing them all were the majestic walls and towers of the city. What a memorable sight! What a moving vision! No wonder people saw Jerusalem as “the perfection of beauty!” (Ps. 50:2).

When the nineteenth century visitor entered the city and observed it at close range, what he saw depended largely on the sentiments and expectations that he brought with him. Thus, the famous traveller, Edward D. Clarke, who visited Jerusalem early in the century, reported:

We had not been prepared for the grandeur of the spectacle which the city alone exhibited. Instead of a wretched and ruined town, by some described as the desolate remnant of Jerusalem, we beheld . . . a magnificent assem-

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blage of domes, towers, palaces, churches, and monasteries; all of which, glittering in the sun's rays, shone with inconceivable splendor.<sup>1</sup>

But another traveller, Laurence Hutton, who came in 1893, rendered quite a different report:

Its houses are small, irregular in shape, squalid, and mean. Its streets, if streets they can be called, are not named nor numbered; they are steep, crooked, narrow, roughly paved, never cleaned, and in many instances they are vaulted over by the buildings on each side of them. Never a pair of wheels traverse them, and rarely is a horse or a donkey seen within the walls. The halt, the maimed, and the blind, the leprous and the wretchedly poor, form the great bulk of the population of Jerusalem, and with the single exception of the Hebrews, they are persistent and clamorous beggars. Trade and commerce seem to be confined to the bare necessities of life, and to dealers in beads and crucifixes. . . .

Jerusalem is unique as a city in which everything is serious and solemn and severe. It has no clubs, no bar-rooms, no beer-gardens, no concert-halls, no theatres, no lecture-rooms, no places of amusement of any kind, no street bands, no wandering minstrels, no wealthy or upper classes, no mayor, no aldermen, no elections, no newspapers, no printing-presses, no book stores, except one outside the walls, for the sale of Bibles, no cheerfulness, no life. No one sings, no one dances, no one laughs in Jerusalem; even the children do not play.<sup>2</sup>

Strange to say, both reports are true. They represent the proverbial two sides of the same coin. Some approach Jerusalem with a "quivering sensitiveness," with an awareness of the city's history and sanctity, while others visit it as just another "Levantine" city. Some seek Jerusalem and find it; others seek nothing and find nothing. They "do" the city, see "everything," and feel nothing. Then they leave, untouched by Jerusalem's inimitable grace and grandeur. It never even occurs to them that they have been witnessing not only the cradle of three great religions, but the very foundation of Western Civilization.

### *A City of Many Misfortunes*

That Jerusalem, up to recent times, did contain many sickly, festering sores, one cannot deny. Their source is to be found in the city's misfortunes throughout its long history. Natural disasters such as droughts and plagues, earthquakes and famines often brought grim suffering and bitter affliction. Even more distressing has been the scourge of armed forces bent on conquest. Unfortunately, Jerusalem has always been regarded as a grand prize by empire builders and religious adventurers. It has been besieged almost fifty times and was repeatedly destroyed. Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks,

1. Edward D. Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa* (London, 1812), Vol. II, pp. 523-524.

2. Laurence Hutton, *Literary Landmarks of Jerusalem* (New York, 1895), pp. 16-19.

Romans, Persians, Saracens, Crusaders, Mongols, Ottoman Turks, and, in our century, British, Arabs, and Jews have fought for it.

No greater fame could attach itself to a warrior than to become the conquerer of Jerusalem. Titus, Omar, Saladin, Allenby captured it. Their fame reached every corner of the world, not so much because of their victories, though some of these were, indeed, notable, but mainly because of the magnitude of the prize. But after each of these calamities, Jerusalem rose from its ashes and regained its spiritual role as the mistress of great religions.

Jerusalem's greatest affliction, however, has been the neglect, misrule, and shameless despoliation by ruling officials. The systematic plunder and unending neglect made the city a wretched place to live in or even to visit. Eighteenth and nineteenth century travellers vividly describe the open sewers, the pestilential stench, the decrepit hovels, the wretched poverty, the pervading filth, and the pitiful disease-ridden population that one found there. One writer says that many visitors remembered it with their nostrils and carried away the memory of their discomforts. Many of the very same travellers, however, blessed their good fortune for the privilege of visiting the holy city and worshipping at the shrines and holy places of their respective religions.

One of the remarkable facts about Jerusalem is that despite its many destructions it was never moved from its desolate foundations, as has been the fate of most other demolished cities. Only once did Jerusalem change its location and that was from the Ophel which is south of the Temple Mount to the Upper City which is immediately west of the Temple Mount. But the Temple Mount itself has remained inviolate for the Jews these 3,000 years, and for the Moslems these 1,300 years. Similarly, the spots of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus have remained fixed for the Christians these 2,000 years.

Jerusalem has seen many wars and was more than once soaked in rivers of blood, but its glory is to be found in the peaceful words of prophets, psalmists, saints, and scholars. Jerusalem's essential role in history has been performed not by soldiers but by teachers, and its future glory will emanate from its spiritual institutions.

### *A Holy City*

An aura of sanctity has always hung over Jerusalem, and it has cast a spell over many a saint and mystic, as well as ordinary men who not infrequently became its willing captives. Throughout the centuries people have been coming to Jerusalem, each with his own peculiar piety, and all have helped to create the city's baffling and inscrutable mystery. For them, it has been first and foremost a holy city. Jews have called it *Ir Ha-Kodesh*, the Holy City; Moslems have called it *El Kuds*, an expression that is identical with the Hebrew appellation; and Christians have known it as *Terra Sancta*, the Holy Land where Jesus' sepulchre is located.



Because Jerusalem is the holy city for hundreds of millions, it is difficult to see it with absolute clarity, or to describe it with thorough accuracy. It demands a vision that penetrates the reality of ordinary substance and transcends the dimensions of precise measurement. This is what has made it the queen of holy cities, the mother of great religions.

In our secular age this may seem irrelevant. However, this is not actually so. Many modern people, having lost much of their traditional commitments to things sacred, have been burdened by a spiritual emptiness. Among them, there are not a few who are in search of something sacred to fill this void. They want their secular lives to be sanctified notwithstanding the obvious contradiction. In their search they respond, willy nilly, to Jerusalem, at times only nostalgically, just because it is the Holy City.

The secret of Jerusalem's greatness is a baffling mystery only for those who measure greatness in terms of size and material assets. By these criteria Jerusalem would be just another city of small promise, for it is not located strategically. It is not a port city, it does not lie astride a navigable river or a caravan route, it has no rich natural resources, and it has been plagued by perennial water shortages. However, it has been blessed with intangibles of spiritual significance and sacred associations. As George Adam Smith said, "Nowhere else has the universal struggle (between the spirit of God and the spirit of man) been waged so consciously, so articulately as in Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> This intense struggle was waged by the inspired teachers and sublime religious institutions to which Jerusalem gave birth. And it is this struggle that has endowed Jerusalem with an irresistible power to move the hearts of men, to excite their enthusiasm, and to rouse them to righteous action. These spiritual assets have enabled Jerusalem to speak to man's conscience; they have made Jerusalem great; these fragile attributes have endowed even Jerusalem's ruins with spiritual meaning and its desolation with everlasting significance.

### *The Center of the World*

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam agree that Jerusalem is the center of the world. While Jews and Moslems put that center on the Temple Mount, Christians put it in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, both in the Old City. No doubt the Christian and Islamic designations derive from the earlier Jewish tradition which is recorded in the Bible, the Apocrypha, and the rabbinic literature. Thus we read:

The world may be compared to the eye of man. The white of the eye is the ocean which surrounds the whole world; the iris is the inhabited land; the pupil is Jerusalem; the face in the pupil is the Temple, may it soon be rebuilt.<sup>4</sup>

3. George Adam Smith, *Jerusalem* (London, 1907), Vol. I, p. 5.

4. *Massekhet Derekh Eretz*, ed. & trans. by Michael Higger (New York, 1935) (Chap. 7:38), p. 56. See also *Yomah* 54b. For references in the Apocrypha see the Book of Enoch 26:1 and the Book of Jubilees 8:19.

From rabbinic literature this idea passed to Christianity. Jerome speaks of Jerusalem as the “navel of the earth,” a phrase derived from his Jewish teachers. And the Moslems took the idea from both the Jews and the Christians. These poetic expressions were literalized, so that we find a 16th century map in the form of a three-leaved clover representing the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The center out of which the leaves grow is a circle with the name of Jerusalem inscribed in it.

In Jerusalem the visitor is shown the exact spot in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where the center of the world is located. Some skeptics mock at the ignorance and credulity of the simple folk who point to a specific spot and say, “This is the center of the world.” But neither the Rabbis of the Talmud, nor the anonymous authors of the Apocrypha, nor “the credulous monks” fancied that Jerusalem was geographically in the center of the world. What they did know was the singularity of Jerusalem as a spiritual force of central and worldwide potency. The prophet Isaiah concisely expressed this idea: “Out of Zion shall go forth the divine teaching, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3).” From Zion God’s teaching has gone forth and has affirmed man’s striving for salvation. From Jerusalem has gone forth the word of the Lord with the comforting promise that the bleak history of mankind will yet turn into the brighter world to come. From this life-giving source Western civilization has derived its vitality.

### *Jerusalem the Eternal*

When a Jew is called up to the reading of the Torah at a synagogue service he pronounces a benediction in which he thanks God for “planting eternal life in our midst.” He attributes Israel’s eternity to the divine teachings of the Holy Scriptures which God has transmitted to the Jewish people through His prophets. Jerusalem shares this eternity for exactly the same reason. A mere glimpse at the city’s career reveals that its survival, against enormous odds, is as baffling a mystery as the survival of the Jewish people. It also reveals that the secret of its eternity can be understood only in terms of its spiritual assets.

Jerusalem has had a most inauspicious political history. It began its existence as a small mountain town in a small Middle Eastern country. Three thousand years ago it became the capital city of a small people and its political fortunes were anything but promising. Nonetheless, during the three millennia of its recorded history, mighty empires and their proud capital cities have vanished, while Jerusalem has not only survived but has manifested remarkable powers of resilience and renewal.

This miracle of survival in the face of overwhelming political and military disasters and destructions has been explained in terms of its spiritual career, which began three thousand years ago when King David moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem. He built an altar on Mount Moriah,

which came to be known as the Temple Mount, and brought to there the tablets of the Ten Commandments. His son, King Solomon, then erected the Temple on the site of his father's altar. Equally, if not more, decisive was the fact that Jerusalem heard the voice of the prophets who brought God's message to Israel. It also heard the voice of the Psalmists who sang of God's compassion and mercy. The role of the prophets and the psalmists was later taken up by the Rabbis of the Talmud who applied the prophetic message to the daily experience of the people. They also founded a new religious institution, the synagogue, and formulated its liturgy.

At the end of the first millennium of Jerusalem's sacred history a Jewish teacher, named Jesus, gathered a handful of disciples and followers who carried his teachings far beyond the geographical borders, and won over multitudes of adherents. The city thus became holy not only for the Jews but also for millions of Christians. Six hundred years later, a religious teacher arose in the Arabian Peninsula who heard from Jews and Christians about their respective traditions. He adopted some parts of them, often in a garbled form, and incorporated them into the new religion which he founded. In the new faith, Islam, Jerusalem occupied a place of sanctity for millions of Moslems.

That sanctity is the secret of Jerusalem's survival. It is holiness that has endowed it with everlasting life. It has survived because it transcends the ordinary earth-bound and time-bound realities; it is a city that awakens yearnings for the immutable and the timeless. In Jerusalem, current history seems irrelevant, because the remote past and the ultimate future press on one's consciousness. Eternity is the hallmark of Jerusalem.

### *The Perfection of Beauty*

Visitors find Jerusalem a city of surprises. Apart from its monuments, shrines, holy places, and sacred associations, it is invested with novelty and beauty. The Talmud states that ten measures of beauty descended to the world; nine were taken by Jerusalem, and one by the rest of the world (*Kid.* 49b). No wonder that many have fallen in love with it. "How the poetry of the place gets hold of you!," says C.R. Ashbee.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, many have claimed that Jerusalem has gotten into their blood, and they have become its life-long, dedicated lovers, among them, unabashedly, this writer.

But not everyone has this reaction. Only those who bring with them a sympathy for Jerusalem's unique essence can see it with their hearts and their imaginations. Yet even those who see it only with their eyes are not altogether immune to its charm. Hardened globe-trotters and sight-seers who are sated with the attractions of London, Paris, Rome, Athens, and Cairo find Jerusalem absorbing, especially because it is so cosmopolitan and exotic. In its streets the visitor meets not only the ubiquitous, camera-

5. C.R. Ashbee, *A Palestine Notebook* (London, 1923), p. 20.

laden tourists and the earnest, sad-looking pilgrims from all over the world, but also a vast variety of people of diverse nationalities, languages, dress, and manners who live apart yet mingle freely in the bazaars and side-streets. One meets Christians, both Occidentals and Orientals, adherents of more than thirty churches and sects, each with its own ritual, who are regarded by all the other sects as in deadly error. Then one meets an amazing diversity of clerics — priests, monks, and nuns — a variety not to be matched in any other place in the world. And not to be overlooked are the missionaries and men possessed by strange visions, all proclaiming their panaceas for the world's ills.

One finds a similar variety among the Jews and Moslems. There is the Orthodox Jew with his long, curled earlocks, wearing his long gabardine coat and white stockings and, on Sabbaths and festivals, a heavy fur-trimmed headgear. Along side this replica of 17th century Polish fashion, walks a *Halutz* (pioneer) from a *Kibbuz* in his short-sleeved shirt and short trunks and sandals. This scene is in sharp contrast to the Arab with his flowing Khafiah, long coat and skirt, walking with his fellow Moslem dressed in the latest Western outfit. Add to these the variety of rabbis, dervishes, and Imams, each with his own distinctive vestments. What a medley of God's creatures! What a cosmopolitan throng! And, as happens occasionally in the spring of the year, Jerusalem is overflowing with a multitude of humanity in an indescribable variety of dress participating in diverse rituals and ceremonies, the like of which no city can match.

### *The Joy of All Earth*

To write about Jerusalem is often frustrating, because it is a unique and compounded enigma. G.K. Chesterton aptly said that "Jerusalem is a small town of big things; and the average modern city is a big town of small things."<sup>6</sup> A modern poet writes in ecstasy:

Jerusalem has many faces,  
Expressions that vary with the seasons and with the centuries,  
But its granite heart beats once in a thousand years,  
And resumes the inscrutability of stone. . . .<sup>7</sup>

How really can one capture this unique city in mere words? How can one adequately describe Jerusalem's beauty, her halo of holiness, her sacred history? How can one fathom her soul, her charm, her meaning? What a powerful magnet is built into her very structure! What bewitching charm inhabits her very essence! The lover of Jerusalem is forever shackled to her, yet, serving the beloved Jerusalem is a joyous and lifelong task, for Jerusalem is, indeed, "the joy of all the earth" (Ps. 48:3).

6. G.K. Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem* (London, 1920), p. 113.

7. Judah Stampfer, *Jerusalem Has Many Faces* (New York, 1950), p. 13.

## The Branches of Judaism

*Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective.* By MARC LEE RAPHAEL. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1985. 265 pages, \$19.95.

*Reviewed by* HENRY L. FEINGOLD

THE RELATIONSHIP between Jewishness and Judaism complicates the history of all post-emancipation Jewish communities, and none more than that of American Jewry. At one time, the two were identical but, today, Judaism refers to matters of faith while being Jewish pertains to the ethnic temporal component. There are those who claim that it is possible to be Jewish without being Judaic but the reverse, being Judaic without being Jewish, is clearly not possible. The problems with the book here under review all stem from the author's unwillingness to confront the play between the two. We learn that the three branches of American Judaism have produced different blossoms at different times in their development and that they hold startlingly different assumptions about the faith. But a linear "state of the faith" study, which this study is, seems strangely static. The differences between the Orthodox branch and the others are no longer confined to the faithful. If not resolved they may, ultimately, tear asunder the entire Jewish enterprise in America, secular and religious. How strange that is. Religion *per se* is, after all, no longer terribly important to most American Jews. Yet they are discovering, as we do not from this book, that Jewishness and Judaism are somehow

linked and that one cannot retain its viability without the other.

The triangulation of American Judaism which this book describes in such detail stems from the confrontation with the Enlightenment and the resultant Emancipation. These fissures were already present in European Jewry but the Holocaust prevents the historian from ever knowing whether European Jewry would eventually have developed formal separate branches, each with its own constituency and institutional structure, as was the case in America. American Judaism reflects the denominationalism characteristic of the predominant Protestantism which, in turn, was linked to the wall between church and state created by the forefathers. For American Judaism it meant that there would be no chief rabbi, no government salaries for the clergy and congregations based on voluntary association. The absence of "church hierarchy" with power to compel adherence led, naturally, to fragmentation. In a democratic garden many flowers and branches could bloom. Fragmentation did not stop at the boundaries of a particular branch. Raphael demonstrates how marked are the variations within branches like the Orthodox. In a free secular society there is no power which can order a Jew to his Judaism, much less to a particular branch of it. By the same token, a congregation cannot be ordered to adhere to the demands of the center. Like the Protestant denomination, American Judaism is pervasively congregational. In a real sense the religion which is truly "radical other," at least in the organizational sense, is not Judaism but Catholicism, which retains its hierarchical structure.

There is an additional source of Jewish denominationalism not found in the Protestant community. The latter's divisions are

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rooted in theological differences compounded by regionalism and sheer politics. Judaism never developed a formal theology. Like Islam, it is a religion of law (Halakah). Finding the correct place for the law in the scheme of things is the ultimate arbiter of the differences among the branches of Judaism. Orthodoxy believes that Jews live to fulfill the commandments of God's law as embodied in Torah and rabbinic interpretation. Conversely, Conservative Jews believe that the law exists for the Jewish people and can be formally changed to meet their needs as expressed in normative practice. Thus, if one finds cars in the parking lot on the Sabbath and microphones in the sanctuary, it is the better to listen to the voice from Sinai. Largely dismissing "ceremonial law," the Reform movement finds the shining light of Judaism in the ethical tenets preached by the prophets and found also in other parts of the bible. Eschewing the "supernaturalism" of the traditional faith, the Reconstructionists transmute some parts of Jewish law into "sancta." They become the symbols and the customs of Jewish peoplehood which is the only way that the notion of the sacredness embodied in the idea of chosenness can be handled. That may account for the fact that Reconstructionist congregations are imbued with such a traditional *ruah* even while they are, in fact, the most modern in sensibility.

That description is, of course, terribly simplified but it does present, in a nutshell, the things that Raphael describes in detail. He examines, in turn, each branch in terms of its ideological and institutional development. That yields some interesting insights. In some respects, for example, the Reform branch today stands at a pole that is directly opposite its classical 19th century predecessor. That stance

can be seen as either a tribute to its dynamism and that it possesses a built-in self-corrective mechanism or it could indicate a lack of constancy and sense of self which can be bad news for a religious movement which, above all, must claim to possess divine immutable truths. The Conservative movement continues to experience all the advantages and disadvantages of ideological amorphousness, which permits it to occupy the middle ground between the Reform and Orthodox branches. But it has a pitfall as well. When it is not in danger of becoming a pale shadow of the Reform movement which inevitably makes crucial changes a generation earlier, it can seem like a less authentic version of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy has yet a more vexing set of problems. Despite the role of umbrella organizations like The Union of Orthodox Rabbis, the Orthodox branch is so divided into factions that it lacks the modicum of coherence required for unified action. It seems to be a bundle of separate twigs rather than a branch. Raphael has assigned the exalted status of branchhood to the Reconstructionist movement. That may soon become a reality since the movement has entered upon a period of growth after the establishment of its own rabbinical college in Philadelphia. But, traditionally, Reconstructionist influence has been projected through its ideas rather than its institutions. The congregations affiliated with it are still comparatively few in number. For the time being Reconstructionism might be better considered a twig rather than a branch.

What one learns from *Profiles in American Judaism* is that the divisions as reflected in their beliefs, practices and institutions are so deep that it is hardly possible to view them as variations on a single theme. Indeed, it is not inconceivable

ble that these deep divisions which are described in considerable detail in this work may result in a total separation between the Orthodox and all other branches. There are some who observe that this is already the case. That is what the bitter conflicts over the ordination of women, patrilineal descent and the proposed alterations in the "law of return" are all about. Such a split may pose a more imminent threat

to the survival of American Jewry than demographic decline. What we have in this book is a comprehensive description of the sources and the nature of these differences. But to bring us so far without linking the history to the problem of survival which is inherent in the conflict among the branches is like ending a Sabbath service without *Alenu*. It leaves the reader with a sense of incompleteness.

## *The Sisters*

SARAH SINGER

(Leah was the elder and plainer of Laban's two daughters. Although Laban promised Jacob his younger daughter, Rachel, he substituted the veiled Leah at the ceremony. Jacob subsequently married Rachel as well, but neither he nor Rachel ever forgave Leah.)

### I. RACHEL

My father came and bid me stay,  
Enjoined the women bar my way,

And dumb to all entreaty, led  
My sister Leah in my stead

Where Jacob waited for his bride.  
I heard the revelry subside,

The guests depart. I slept alone,  
Dreamt Leah slept beneath a stone.

### II. LEAH

My father did it to be kind,  
And I who knew the dark was blind,

Who loved in silence, hoped, believed,  
But Jacob mocked me, Rachel grieved,

And kinsmen turned away in scorn,  
I grazed the flock, I shucked the corn,

Fled Jacob's wrath. Fulfilled, reviled,  
When autumn came, I bore his child.

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SARAH SINGER teaches poetry seminars in the REAP I program in Great Neck, N.Y. She has been published widely.



# NEW YALE PAPERBOUNDS

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"This book marks the first attempt in any language to present a chronological exposition of seven centuries of evolution of this interesting Jewish sect through a selection of excerpts from the writings of its spokesmen. . . . [A] pioneering achievement." —Zvi Ankori, *Jewish Social Studies* \$15.95



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92A Yale Station  
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## BOOKS RECEIVED

*July through September 1986*

Listing of a book does not preclude its being reviewed in a subsequent issue of JUDAISM.

### **American Jewish Life**

Helmreich, William B. *The World of the Yeshiva*. An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986. 411 pp. (paper).

Rothchild, Sylvia. *A Special Legacy*. An Oral History of Soviet Jewish Emigres in the United States. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986. 336 pp., \$8.95 (paper).

Sandberg, Neil C. *Jewish Life in Los Angeles*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986. xii + 211 pp.

### **Autobiography and Biography**

Hartmann, Heinz. *Once a Doctor, Always a Doctor*. The Memoirs of a German-Jewish Immigrant Physician. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1986. 189 pp., \$18.95.

Marcus, Judith and Zoltan Tar, eds. *George Lukacs*. Selected Correspondence. 1902-1920. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. 318 pp., \$25.00.

### **Bible**

Fox, Everett. *Now These Are the Names*. A New English Rendition of the Book of Exodus. New York: Schocken Books, 1986 (paper).

*Liber Annus* — Jerusalem Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. 542 pp. (paper), 114 photos.

### **Cartoons**

Gerberg, Mort. *The All-Jewish Cartoon Collection*. New York: Perigee Books, 1986. \$5.95.

### **Christianity and Jewish/Christian Relations**

Callan, Terrance. *Forgetting the Root*. The Emergence of Christianity From Judaism. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. vii + 131 pp., \$5.95 (paper).

Eckardt, A. Roy. *Jews and Christians. The Contemporary Meeting*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986. 177 pp., \$19.95.

Liebman, Robert G. and Robert Wuthnow. *The New Christian Right*. New York: Aldine Publishing Co., 1986. 256 pp. (paper).

### **European Jewry**

Iggers, Wilma. *Die Juden in Böhmen und Mähren*. Ein Historisches Lesebuch. Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1986. 391 pp.

Shulman, Nisson E. *Authority & Community*. Polish Jewry in the Sixteenth Century. Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1986. xv + 265 pp., \$20.00.

### **Feminism**

Brayer, Menachem J. *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature*. A Psychosocial Perspective. Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1986. 352 pp., \$20.00.

Kaye/Kantrowitz Melanie and Irena Klepfisz. *The Tribe of Dina*. A Jewish Women's Anthology. Montpelier, Vt.: Sinister Wisdom Books, 1986. 386 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

### **Festschriften and Yearbooks**

Aigen, Ronald S. and Gerson D. Hundert. *Community and the Individual Jew*. Essays in Honor of Lavy M. Becker. Philadelphia: Reconstructionist Rabbinical College Press, 1986. 195 pp., \$12.00 (paper).

*American Jewish Year Book, 1986*. New York: American Jewish Committee, 1986. 515 pp., \$25.95.

### **Fiction**

Appel, Allan, *The Rabbi of Casino Blvd.* New York: St. Martins Press, 1986. 287 pp., \$16.95.

Asch, Sholem, *East River*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1986. 541 pp., \$4.50 (paper).

Cheuse, Alan. *The Grandmothers' Club*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., 1986. 326 pp., \$18.95.

Signoret, Simone. *Adieu Volodya*. New York: Random House, 1986. 418 pp., \$18.95.

Zeldis, Chayym. *Brothers*. A Novel of Supreme Seduction. New York: Shapolsky Publishing Co., 1986. 496 pp., \$8.95 (paper).

### **History**

Baron, Salo W. *The Contemporary Relevance of History*. New York: Columbia U. Press, 1986. 158 pp., \$30.00.

Clauss, Manfred. *Geschichte Israels von der Freiheit bis zur Zerstörung Jerusalems*. Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1986. 239 pp. (paper).

### **Holocaust**

Abells, Chana Byers. *The Children We Remember*. Photos of Yad Vashem. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1986.

Braham, Randolph, ed. *The Origins of the Holocaust*. Christian Anti-Semitism. New York: Columbia U. Press., 1986. 85 pp., \$18.00.

Fischel, Jack and Sanford Pinsker, eds. *Holocaust Studies Annual*, Vol. II. The Churches' Response to the Holocaust. Greenwood, Fla.: The Penterill Pub. Co., 1986. 187 pp., \$20.00.

Lowenstein, Sharon R. *Token Refuge*. The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944-1946. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986. 246 pp., \$27.50.

### **Israel**

Shipler, David K. *Arab and Jew. Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*. New York: Times Books, 1986. xvii + 596 pp., \$22.50.

Penniman, Howard R. and Daniel J. Elazar, eds. *Israel at the Polls, 1981. A Study of the Knesset Elections*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986. xiii + 280 pp. \$35.00.

Murphy/O'Connor, Jerome. *The Holy Land. An Archaeological Guide From Earliest Times to 1700*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986. 382 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

### **Jewish Thought**

Greenberg, Sidney, ed. *Light From Jewish Lamps. A Modern Treasury of Jewish Thoughts*. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc., 1986. 465 pp., \$30.00.

### **Juvenile**

Lewis, Shari. *One Minute Bible Stories*. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1986. 48 pp., \$6.95.

Schnur, Steven. *The Narrowest Bar Mitzvah*. New York: UAHC, 1986. 41 pp., \$5.95 (paper).

### **Literary Criticism**

Abramson, Edward A. *Chaim Potok*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986. 159 pp., \$17.95.

### **Maimonides**

Goldfeld, Lea Naomi. *Moses Maimonides' "Treatise on Resurrection". An Inquiry Into Its Authenticity*. Hoboken. N.J.: KTAV, 1986. 169 pp., \$19.95.

### **Philosophy**

Martín, José Pablo. *Filón de Alejandría y la Génesis de la Cultura Occidental*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Depalma, 1986. 168 pp. (paper).

### **Talmud**

Neusner, Jacob. *Judaism and Scripture. The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986. 641 pp., \$37.00.

Neusner, Jacob. *Judaism The Classical Statement. The Evidence of the Bavli*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986. 267 pp., \$37.00.

### **Theology**

Wine, Sherwin T. *Judaism Beyond God*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1986. 286 pp., \$13.95 (paper).

### **Yemen**

Ahroni, Reuben. *Yemenite Jewry*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986. 227 pp.